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A

HEORTOLOGY

A History of the Christian Festivals from their Origin to the Present Day. By DR. K. A. HEINRICH KELNER, Professor of Catholic Theology at the University of Bonn, translated from the second (corrected and enlarged) edition with the Author's permission, by a priest of the diocese of Westminster. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d.

This work, which traces the different festivals and sacred seasons of the Catholic Church back to their earliest beginnings, and describes both their historical development in the past and their present rank and importance, has already won its way on the Continent to a first place among works dealing with this subject. It has been translated into Italian by the learned liturgical scholar Mercatti, and a French translation is in preparation. In a small compass the learned author has skilfully compressed all that bears upon the historical development of the Ecclesiastical year, with the result that he has produced a work full of interest and instruction.

FRANCIA'S MASTERPIECE



By the same Author

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TYPES, THE TUSCAN TONGUE.

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ALINARI

FRANCIA'S ALTAR-PIECE IN SAN FREDIANO

"FLOS DE SPINA, SPINA CARENS"

FRANCIA'S MASTERPIECE

AN ESSAY ON THE BEGINNINGS
OF THE IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION
IN ART

BY

MONTGOMERY CARMICHAEL

AUTHOR OF "IN TUSCANY," "THE LIFE OF
JOHN WILLIAM WALSH," ETC.

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO. LTD.

DRYDEN HOUSE, GERRARD STREET, W.

1909

ND623.

R523

TO VIND
AIRPORT

CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

TO
THE ILLUSTRIOUS AND HOLY MEMORY
OF
THE VENERABLE JOHN DUNS SCOTUS
DOCTOR SUBTILIS
UPON
THE OCCASION OF THE SIXTH CENTENARY OF HIS
DEATH
1308-1908

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INTRODUCTION

I

THE Iconography of the Immaculate Conception has been singularly neglected both by writers on Art in general, and writers on Marian Iconography in particular. I know of but one work entirely devoted to the subject, that of Monsignor J. B. Malou, a former Bishop of Bruges.¹ It is a fascinating little book, well compacted, clearly arranged, and illumined throughout by the clearness of method and symmetry of thought characteristic of the finished theologian. And yet the learned author scarcely breaks the ground of the subject in the aspects in which it interests the world at large outside the circle of archaeologically inclined Catholics. Great as is his display of learning by the way, valuable and

¹ "Iconographie de l'Immaculée Conception . . . ou de la meilleure manière de représenter ce Mystère." Brussels, 1856, pp. 152. The book loses some of its value by not having a single illustration.

suggestive as are the facts here amassed together, he is concerned chiefly with what should have been, what ought to be, not with what was and is, and of all the great Renaissance painters who depicted the Immaculate Conception, he only mentions Girolamo Marchesi da Cotignola whose picture he has not even seen.¹

If we turn to other writers we get but the veriest scraps. Molanus has no more than two pages;² the Abbé Méry even less;³ Rohault de Fleury's contribution to the subject in his monster volumes is scrappy and of small value;⁴ if the chapter on the Immaculate Conception in the Abbé Maynard's popular illustrated "La Sainte

¹ Girolamo's altar-piece of the Immaculate Conception has been described by Mrs. Jameson, "Legends of the Madonna," 2nd edition, pp. 52-53. This singular picture was bought by Mr. Bromley of Wootton at the Solly sale, and again by Lord Ashburton in 1863 at the Bromley sale. It may no longer be found at Bath House. Where is it now?

² "De Picturis et Imaginibus Sacris." Louvain, 1570, pp. 132b-133.

³ "La Théologie des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs et Dessinateurs." Paris, 1765, pp. 99-100.

⁴ "La Sainte Vierge: études archéologiques et iconographiques." Paris, 1878. 2 vols. Vol. i, pp. 29-37 (Iconographie).

Vierge" is long, he is content to give us but two representations, the Murillo (of course), and the Dresden Dosso Dossi;¹ even in the vast storehouse where we should most of all have looked for the fullest information, Migne's magnificent "Summa Aurea," the subject is dismissed in three or four meagre columns made up chiefly of extracts from Molanus and Malou.²

Turning to professed writers on Art our plight is even worse: with them the Immaculate Conception in Art is still practically an untouched, almost an unknown, subject. One up-to-date instance will suffice. A modern writer of distinction and merit, Adolfo Venturi, has compiled a popular illustrated book on the Madonna which, from its title-page, we are led to believe would be completely representative of the subject.³ Nativity, Presentation, Annunciation, Visitation, Purification, Assumption, Coronation, are all represented

¹ "La Sainte Vierge." Paris, 1877, 2nd edition, pp. 84-106.

² "Summa Aurea de Laudibus B. V. M." Paris, 1862-1866. 13 vols. Vol. ii, pars i, sectio v, "Iconographia B. Mariae Virginis," cols. 948-952.

³ "La Madonna: svolgimento artistico delle rappresentazioni della Vergine" Milan, Hoepli, 1900.

and treated, but incredible as it may seem, there is not one single conscious representation of the Immaculate Conception, not even the inevitable Murillo. True the writer does give some examples of the meeting of St. Joachim and St. Anne at the Golden Gate, and this subject has been used to represent the Immaculate Conception, but they occur in the author's chapter on the Nativity, and he appears to be wholly concerned with the outer aspects of the Legend of the Proto-evangelium S. Jacobi. At all events he does not mention the possibility of any of these pictures standing for the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, though the beautiful Carpaccio altar-piece which he reproduces was actually an Immaculate Conception altar-piece.¹ It is difficult upon any hypothesis to understand how a com-

¹ Now numbered 90 in the Venice Pinacoteca. Formerly in the Church of San Francesco at Treviso. The latest instance I am acquainted with in which this entirely unsatisfactory, inconclusive and unconvincing manner of representing the subject was resorted to, is a fine altar-piece by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio (*ob.* 1560), formerly over the High Altar of the Church of the Conception in the Via dei Servi, Florence (suppressed by Peter Leopold), now in possession of the patron's descendant, the Nobile Giulio Galli-Tassi Passerini.

plete work on the Madonna can omit all mention of the privilege which was the fountain-head of all her other privileges, but this example serves to show how entirely neglected by writers on Art is this aspect of Marian Iconography.

Mrs. Jameson has stated that the Immaculate Conception does not appear in Art until the seventeenth century,¹ and this I suppose is the popular view. Yet, without question, the doctrine was pictorially represented above Altars at least from 1479 onwards, and between this date and the early seventeenth century, a great variety of curious and beautiful representations, all altar-pieces for Altars, were painted, some by the greatest artists, for the churches of Italy. The type illustrated by Francia's picture is rare, and did not last long. Would that it had endured forever! For a riot of ideas set in. The beautiful, simple, deeply mystical form excogitated by the Franciscan champions of the Dogma in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, no longer contented later Renaissance people. Painters of the nude, always eager, in season and out of season,

¹ "Legends of the Madonna," ed. 1872, pp. 45, 46, 51.

to display the nude, took to introducing Adam and Eve into their Conception pictures. Signorelli indicated,¹ Vasari gladly trod the downward path. In October 1540, at the age of twenty-eight, he began his Conception picture for Messere Bindo Altoviti's Altar of the Conception in the Apostoli at Florence,² and but that we can expressly gather from his entertaining life of himself that the picture is intended for an Immaculate Conception it would be hard to think of it as such. He confesses that he found the picture a difficult task ("cosa . . . a me . . . assai malagevole"), but instead of seeking inspiration at the pure fountains of Franciscan symbolism, he asks friends, men of letters, how he is to do the uncomfortable thing, and in the end produces the enormity which he has described with so much gusto in his autobiography. On the same low level is the similar Conception altar-piece

¹ See his Conception picture now in the Duomo at Cortona, the earliest perhaps to introduce Adam and Eve. Cavalcaselle and Crowe (Italian edition, vol. viii, p. 498), actually take this picture with all its trite and naked symbolism to be an Assumption!!

² Vasari (Milanesi's edition), vol. vii, p. 668.

painted by him in 1543 for the Carmine of Lucca (San Pier Cigoli), now in the Communal Pinacoteca of that city.¹

But side by side with such coarse materialism, mystical Conception pictures were still produced, especially for Minorite Convents. Very fanciful, nay fantastic, are some of these pictures, though always essentially devout. The prevailing type is the Madonna surrounded by her attributes and symbols, with but little attention to the correct use of, or difference between, attributes and symbols. These pictures betray how symbolical was the cast of mind of the originators, how steeped they were in knowledge and love of the subject, how resolute that the dogma should be clearly preached on canvas. Another type of Immaculate Conception altar-piece is that which represents the Blessed Virgin attended by the Prophets and Saints who have borne witness to the Privilege. To the world at large these, and other varieties, will have far greater interest, for many, perhaps all, of the great Renaissance painters who were in their zenith during the rich

¹ Vasari (Milanesi's edition), vol. vii, p. 672.

efflorescence of the Dogma (1480-1530), painted marvellous pictures of the Immaculate Conception which have either disappeared or, through ignorance, pass under other designations. Their examples, however, failed to arrest the decay in taste or to perpetuate any one type, and finally, under Spanish ecclesiastical influence—just at the time that Mrs. Jameson supposes the Dogma first appeared in Art—the Immaculate Conception was condemned, we will hope not forever, to the empty, trivial, unimpressive type that now serves to portray the Virgin Conceived without Sin.

II

Most unquestionably is there real need of a book which should rescue, present and illustrate the first types in Art of the Immaculate Conception, and more especially the pictures of the late quattro- and early cinquecento. I have been bold enough to set about the task, but on coming to Francia's Immaculate Conception in San Frediano at Lucca, I soon found that study of the picture carried me far beyond its dogmatic or artistic

aspects. The donor's¹ name and intentions, the approximate date of the picture, the Altar over which it stood, the Chapel which sheltered it,—facts long lost and forgotten—all came to light in the course of research, together with many other details which would have been quite out of place in a general work on the Immaculate Conception in Art, but which have value because of the great importance of the picture. I therefore decided to hazard publication of a study of this one picture only, partly because of the picture's value, partly because I hope that it may in some sort serve as an introduction to the whole subject in contemplation.

III

I do not here write for the learned. There may, perhaps, be a few new facts in this little book of interest to the learned. Chapters V and VI,

¹ The word "Donor" is consecrated by use in such a connection, and it would be affectation to avoid it. But it does not very happily describe the patron of a Chaplaincy who ennobles the Altar of his private Chapel in a Church with an altar-piece. He gives to God certainly, but not to the Opera. Though ecclesiastical law leaves him but restricted rights,

for instance, record dry fact that might have been summed up in a sentence or two but for the need of exposition and proof, and the facts in these chapters may be of importance to any future learned writer on the picture. My real concern, however, is with the well-intentioned who go into art-galleries, admiring and loving religious pictures, but hazy of their actual uses both in the dead past and the living present. To very many of them an altar-piece is no better thing than an easel-picture painted to be framed and hung upon bare walls, an object of mere admiration, not of edification, a decorative adjunct at best, not a moving spring of religious feeling, greatly honoured because of the Divine or holy persons it represents, the divinely-revealed truth which it glorifies, or the Divine Mysteries which are celebrated under its shadow. Without ever being formally didactic, without formulating principles in set phrases, I have yet systematically

nominal ownership of the picture remains with him as surely as his right of presentation to the Benefice, and all the more because the altar-piece is a mere *res benedicta*, and not a solemn *res consecrata* like the Altar itself.

sought to tell the readers to whom I am appealing how to look at a religious picture. I bring out the immense importance of locating the exact "provenienza," the actual spot, that is, whence a religious picture came by fraud or violence to hang in meaningless isolation on the walls of an art-gallery. It is useful to know whether the picture was in a Cathedral, a Collegiate Church, a Conventual Church, or a Parish Church; useful also to know what the Dedication, who the local Patron Saint, who the first Bishop of the ancient See, who the founders of the private Chapels. All this is essential information to which too much attention cannot be paid, but it does not suffice; indeed it is as nothing to knowing the Altar from which the picture has come, and the Saint or Solemnity to which it is dedicated. For want of elementary essential knowledge such as this, some very learned and approved good writers, as I shall show, have entirely failed to grasp the significance of the Francia in San Frediano. The thing is so simple too: if the Altar is dedicated to the Conception, the altarpiece must represent the Conception. But it

is no uncommon thing to find a writer with little Liturgy and less Theology attempting to fix the meaning of a picture without having first interrogated the Altar over which it at one time was placed.¹ This is the one sure test of meaning. It is not employed, or it is ignored, because the beauty, rather than the subject of a picture, is too much regarded as its chief feature. The more beautiful, the more artistic, the picture, the more luminous, no doubt, the subject; but it is beauty that is the accident, subject that is the essential, beauty the matter, subject the form, beauty the thing of limited expression, subject the matter of infinite expansion. How many picture-gallery Catalogues have subject indexes? Scarcely one.² Nothing could more eloquently emphasize the prevailing half-heartedness about

¹ "L'autel est le plus éloquent de tous les livres; des volumes de commentaires suffiraient à peine pour l'expliquer." Gaume, "Catéchisme de Persévérance," 6th edition, Paris, 1849, vol. vii, p. 220.

² The Catalogue of the Pisa Museo Civico, compiled by its learned Director, Signor Augusto Bellini Pietri, has a full and most useful subjects index. Some big Galleries have much to learn from little Galleries.

subjects. If I am studying the subject of the Assumption in Art I must walk through the whole of our National Gallery, or go through the whole of its excellent Catalogue, to find the three or four examples which the Gallery possesses. This is not as it should be; this is greatly to hamper the study of pictures. The catalogue of the future should be so compiled as to enable the student to replace each picture over the Altar from which it has been taken; as it is, most catalogues, and perhaps all books about religious pictures, need recasting from the point of view of the ultimate "provenienza."

To take an instance here and now. A beautiful Francia in the National Gallery (No. 179) is described as "The Virgin with the Infant Christ, and St. Anne enthroned, surrounded by Saints." This is a faithful description of the picture, but we are not told what, as an altar-piece, it really is. By interrogating the Altar in San Frediano whence it originally came, we find that it *is* an altar-piece from a Chapel of St. Anne. This is its *raison d'être*, its one essential feature; to this end alone was it brought into existence, and this

explains the enthronement of St. Anne in the picture. But not a word of all this is there in the catalogue which does, however, mention that the picture came from a Bonvisi Chapel, thus giving more importance to the Patrician founders than to the great Saint whom it was their delight to honour.

Yet another example from the National Gallery Catalogue, a monument of research and careful compilation, faulty only from this one important point of view. After going through its 678 pages, I can find but one obvious picture of the Immaculate Conception, that by Carlo Crivelli. Not that the compilers call it so: far from it: they call it instead "The Madonna in Ecstasy." But as they have very carefully described it, and reproduced the text of a scroll which appears in it—*Ut in mente Dei ab initio concepta fui, ita et facta sum*—it is easy enough, to one who has studied the subject, to see that the picture is an Immaculate Conception altar-piece. The title here chosen has nothing to do with the *raison d'être* of the picture, for never yet was there, or could there ever be, an Altar dedicated to "The

Madonna in Ecstasy." The designation besides being misleading, effectually hides the fact that the National Gallery does possess at least one representation of the Immaculate Conception.¹

A volume might be filled with instances in which the want of interrogating the Altar has led to the most erroneous, and indeed ludicrous, descriptions of pictures. But I will here, in con-

¹ I have no sort of doubt that Leonardo da Vinci's exquisite "Virgin of the Rocks" (No. 1093) is also an Immaculate Conception altar-piece, but that is too large a subject to enter upon here. Crivelli's beautiful picture (No. 906) was painted in 1492. The compilers of the Catalogue state that it was "formerly in the Chapel of the Malatesta family in the Church of San Francesco at Rimini." (Always the patrician founder, rather than the religious dedication!) But there is no Chapel of the Malatesta in San Francesco—the whole Church might more reasonably be called of the Malatesta—and Marcheselli, "Pitture delle chiese di Rimini descritte" (Rimini, 1756) makes no mention of any such picture. Until further evidence is produced, I see no reason to question the generally received statement of the Marchese Ricci ("Memorie Storiche delle Arti e delle Artisti della Marca d'Ancona." Macerata, 1834, vol. i, p. 215) that it was painted for the Franciscans of San Francesco at Pergola. See also p. 228, note 31, where the writer records that the picture has recently been removed from this Church. Mr. M'Neil Rushforth, in his interesting book on Crivelli, does not fix the actual "provenienza," but simply says "Pergola or Rimini," p. 120.

clusion, rather take an instance in which, owing to obscurity of treatment, a knowledge of the Dedication alone could give the true meaning of a picture. I refer to a peculiar picture by Timoteo Viti in the Brera Gallery at Milan (No. 507). In the centre stands the Blessed Virgin; on the Gospel side St. John Baptist; on the Epistle side St. Sebastian;¹ above the Baptist is a descending Angel, apparently in the act of Announcing; above the Blessed Virgin the Divine Infant is descending on the Holy Dove. As far as appearances go no sign or symbol of the Conception, no champions or witnesses of the Dogma. As far as appearances go one would say a bizarre Annunciation, in which there is a complete presentment of the Valentinian heresy which taught that Our Lord, though born of His Mother, took flesh in Heaven and not of the Blessed

¹ Most, I think all, writers about pictures speak of the right and left hand side of an altar-piece. With some the right is the beholder's right; with others, more reasonably, the right is the heraldic dexter. The Altar itself is so little in their vision, that they have forgotten the convenient terms, *Cornu Evangelii*, *Cornu Epistolae*, which alone can indicate beyond a doubt the side of the Altar-piece to which a writer is referring.

Virgin.¹ The compiler of the Catalogue, Signor Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri, calls the picture a Conception. He makes no mention of the Altar, but must surely have taken his information from that open book. For I find on inquiry, what I would otherwise never have believed, that the picture was painted for a Chapel of the Conception founded by the Bonaventura family in the Church of San Bernardino outside Urbino.²

Altare locutum est, causa finita est.

IV

I think that this is the first time that any one single picture has ever been dealt with in a bound

¹ Méry, "La Théologie des Peintres," lib. i, cap. v, p. 25.

² Information kindly obtained for me by P. Candido Mariotti, Provincial of the Minors in the Marches. Crowe and Cavalcaselle ("History of Painting in North Italy," vol. i, p. 579, and note) who style this picture an Annunciation, also say it came from the Chapel of the Bonaventura. Needless to say they make no mention of the Altar. Viti has taken this curious idea from his master, Francia, who painted a similar picture for San Francesco in Bologna (now in the Pinacoteca, No. 371). Mr. Berenson ("North Italian Painters," p. 220) also calls Francia's picture a Conception, and must surely have interrogated the Altar, which I have not had an opportunity of doing.

volume all to itself. But that can only be because the subject and significance of pictures receive too meagre an attention at the hands of writers. There must be many a single picture which merits treatment in the noble proportions of royal in-quarto. What can be more instructive and suggestive than an altar-piece? It often represents contemporary enthusiasms, contemporary hopes and aspirations, and illustrates the development of doctrine and devotion more vividly, and as surely, as the learned treatises of theologians or the mellifluous works of spiritual writers. This, too, I have sought to show by the way in the course of illustrating Francia's divine altar-piece.

One other object have I had before me in this book: to show how it was written. Modest as are these researches yet every book of the kind should be so constructed as to be a lesson in research. Again I repeat that I am not writing for the learned, who must bear with me if I invariably translate simple Italian and Notarial Dog Latin. Many books crammed with learning, fail of their purpose through the reader not being made familiar with the quarries whence the know-

ledge comes, nor ever once being invited to inspect the process of building. He should have the opportunity of seeing for himself that the marble is genuine, that the builder's material is of good quality, that his order of construction is according to the rules of architecture. Then indeed will he take quite a different interest in the author's edifice.

V

And now, *amice lector*, I invite thee without more ado to come with me, and in one only picture explore the mind and taste the fancy of as great a painter as ever the Christian Faith produced. And I err greatly if once taught by the mind and illumined by the fancy of Francesco Francia, an altar-piece do not become to thee what it is to me, an enchanted land of ever-varied wonders, an ecstasy of the imagination, the heart's desire, the mind's delight, the soul's supernal treasure in the realms of Art.

M. C.

LIVORNO,
8th December, 1908.

THE BLESSING OF AN ALTAR-PIECE

℣. Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.

℞. Qui fecit coelum et terram.

℣. Dominus vobiscum.

℞. Et cum spiritu tuo.

OREMUS

OMNIPOTENS sempiternae Deus, qui Sanctorum tuorum imagines pingi non reprobas, ut quoties illas oculis corporis intuemur, toties eorum actus et sanctitatem ad imitandum memoriae oculis meditemur: hanc, quaesumus, imaginem in honorem et memoriam Beatissimae Virginis Mariae sine labe originali conceptae adaptatam benedicere, et sanctificare digneris: et praesta; ut quicumque coram illa, Immaculatam Virginem suppliciter colere et honorare studuerit, illius

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meritis et obtentu a te gratiam in praesenti, et aeternam gloriam obtineat in futurum. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.

R̄. AMEN.

*Ultimo aspergat aqua benedicta.*¹

¹ From the "Rituale Romanum," tit. viii, cap. 25. TRANSLATION. V̄. Our help is in the Name of the Lord. R̄. Who hath made Heaven and Earth. V̄. The Lord be with you. R̄. And with thy spirit. LET US PRAY. Almighty and Everlasting God, Who art well pleased that the likenesses of Thy Saints should be made manifest in painting, so that as often as we behold them with our bodily eyes so often may we resolve in our hearts to imitate their holiness of life: vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, to bless and sanctify this picture painted in honour and memory of the most Blessed Virgin Mary Conceived without sin: and grant; that whosoever shall venerate and honour the Immaculate Virgin in prayer before it, may by her merits and intercession obtain from Thee grace in this life, and eternal glory in the life to come. Through Christ our Lord. R̄. AMEN.

FRANCIA'S MASTERPIECE

I

DESCRIPTION OF THE PICTURE

IN the old Lombard Basilica of San Frediano in Lucca, and, to be precise, on the North wall of the Chapel called of the Assumption, hangs in a great gilt frame a noble altar-piece, the work of the immortal Bolognese painter, Francesco Raibolini, detto il Francia. The picture is in oils, painted upon wood; it is unsigned and undated; the height of it is eight feet, excluding the predella; the breadth six and a half feet; and it is covered by a thick red curtain. The whole scene is one of great beauty, of extraordinary serenity, of deep religious feeling, of perfect faith illustrated by such reasoning as flows from the premises of Faith undoubted. Above, in the Heavens, in a glory or mandorla,

surrounded by the heads of adorable cherubs and attended by two adoring angels, sits the Eternal Father¹ in benign majesty; at His feet kneels the Queen of Virgins in exquisite humility, her head bowed to receive the touch of His life-saving, life-giving Sceptre. Below upon Earth are the standing figures of two Kings in Israel, Solomon and David, and two Doctors of the Church, Anselm and Augustine, each with a scroll in his hand, and, between them, the kneeling figure of a Saint of the Franciscan Order, apparently Saint Anthony of Padua—all without halo.

1. On the scroll of King Solomon is written: TOTA PULCRA ES AMICA MEA ET MACULA NON EST IN TE. (Thou art all fair, my love, and in thee there is no spot. *Canticle of Canticles*, iv, 7.)

2. On the scroll of King David, who is striking his Psalmist's lyre with one hand, is written: IN SOLE² POSUIT TABERNACULUM SUUM. (He hath

¹ The Father and not the Son, for hair and beard are a sable, silvered.

² "In Sole, id est in Beata Virgine Maria," comments Denis the Carthusian in his Commentary on the Psalms.

ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. ANSELM 3

set His tabernacle in the Sun. *Psalm* xviii, 6; *Authorized Version*, xix, 4.)

3. Saint Augustine bears the words: IN CELO QUALIS EST PATER TALIS EST FILIUS; IN TERRA QUALIS EST MATER TALIS EST FILIUS SECUNDUM CARNEM. (In Heaven such as the Father is such is the Son; on Earth such as the Mother is such is the Son according to the flesh. *S. Aug. Serm. 20 ad Fratres.*)

4. On Saint Anselm's scroll we read: NON PUTO ESSE VERUM AMATOREM VIRGINIS QUI CELEBRARE RESPUIT FESTUM SUE CONCEPCIONIS. (I do not reckon him a true lover of the Virgin who refuses to celebrate the feast of her Conception. *S. Anselm. Sermo de Concept. B.V.M.* in Migne Patr. Lat. clix. 322.¹) An unusual circumstance: the Saint himself holds, not his Crosier, but the Archbishopal Cross borne before an Archbishop and the symbol of his jurisdiction. Of course there is a nice reason for this; Francia never outraged the proprieties for the sake of mere decoration; the object here is that the Lucchesi should by no

¹ Edited by Migne among the spurious works of Saint Anselm.

manner of means think that he intended to depict their Saint Anselm, *Bishop* of Lucca (*ob.* 1086).

5. The kneeling figure, whose face is a masterly combination of intellectual force and saintly beauty, bears no witness upon earth. His office is altogether different. He looks up into Heaven and sees the Heavenly vision; the great subject of the picture is literally revealed to him. That he is a Franciscan the habit, though white rather than grey, clearly tells us.¹ The shape of the capuce, too, is undeniably Franciscan, as also are the bare feet, and if other evidence were wanting the picture plainly reveals the girdle of rope, characteristic only of the Sons of Saint Francis. That the kneeling figure must, by the ordinary laws of interpretation, be taken for Saint Anthony of Padua is manifest from the flame in his hand, a favourite symbol to indicate the Seraphic thaumaturgist with the painters of the tre- and quattrocento.

One further small point of description. Be-

¹ See innumerable specimens in Niccolò Catalano's "Fiume del Terrestre Paradiso," Florence, 1652, and especially the plates of kneeling figures on page 460.

tween the figures of the Franciscan Saint and King David is a low marble structure, having at a superficial glance something the resemblance of an open tomb. Lilies sprout on the hither side of it, and roses on the farther side. If a tomb, it could only be the tomb of the Virgin Assumed, but that assuredly it cannot be, for the flowers grow outside in the earth, and not inside in the space lately hallowed by the Body of the Mother of God; besides, who ever saw the tomb of the Virgin without attendant Apostles. The marble structure has at the first glance the appearance of an oblong, but look at it under a lens and another angle at least will come out. It is quadrate, if not sexagonal,¹ and is no other thing than a well. A tomb would be utterly meaningless in this picture, a well is full of beautiful significance.² But I must have done with description before coming to meaning.

¹ Restoration appears to me to have played havoc with the angles.

² "Hortus conclusus, fons signatus." *Cant. Cantic.*, iv, 12. I am entirely unable to identify the place in the distance. It is not Lucca, but the hills have a look of the Lucchesia. I hazard that it is Castello Nozzano.

Below the magnificent altar-piece, once separated therefrom as the predella, but now inclosed in the same great gilt frame, are four exquisite little chiaroscuro sketches, a veritable delight to all people of artistic sensibilities. To the description of these little pictures, to their touching significance, I will return in a later chapter.

Let this be the place to state that like Francia's altar-piece in the Bonvisi Chapel of Saint Anne, now in the National Gallery, this work, too, had a lunette. The Canonico Tommaso Trenta, author of a guide to Lucca published in 1820, distinctly tells us that the work is divided into three principal parts, the main picture, the lunette, and the predella. "In the lunette," he says, "is the Saviour." No writer before him that I know of, and certainly no writer since, mentions the lunette. I thought that it had wholly and entirely disappeared from the ken of man, but just at the close of these researches I gleaned from the old Reverend Father Sacristan of San Frediano, that he remembered years ago a lunette above the altar where the picture then stood, and that that very lunette was now hanging in a little room

THE
GALLERY



MRS. CARMICHAEL

THE LONG LOST LUNETTE

opposite the Sacristy used for hearing the Confessions of deaf people. It was rather an exciting moment, the thought of seeing an unknown Francia, remembering, too, that some of his finest work has been put into lunettes.

The lunette that I found in the little room where the Confessions of deaf people are heard, was disappointing at the first glance.¹ To begin with, the picture is in a woeful state of deterioration, so mutilated and disfigured by the ravages of time (and, I should say, an old-time restorer), that it is impossible for the profane eye to judge of the quality of the flesh-tints. The face, seen with difficulty, grows upon one strangely. The outstretched arms and hands, if by Francia, are Francia spoiled by time and the restorer. The green curtains, looped up with trivial pale red ribbons, are utterly unpleasing and surely were never the work of Francia. The prominence of the ear is not like Francia, who was given to concealing ears.² I reproduce a photograph of

¹ Width 7 ft. 2 in.; height in centre 2 ft. 1 in. Painted on wood, of course, and in oils.

² Dr. Williamson, "Francia," p. 55.

the lunette, and also a photograph of the Crucifixion, once in Saint Job's at Bologna, now in the Louvre, so that the reader may make a comparison. There is a certain similarity between the heads in this and the long-forgotten lunette at Lucca; the Crown of Thorns in both is in the same style; but in the Saint Job picture the ear is hidden. Whether by Francia or not one thing is certain: that this is the lunette which has always gone along with the tavola and predella. Of course a lunette would certainly have been ordered from Francia, and if this is not his work, or the face only is his work, we can but conclude that he was prevented by death from finishing the commission. Once assured that the lunette is not Francia's, we should be justified in placing the altar-piece in the last days of his life, perhaps in considering it his very last work.¹

One other point connected with description. It is singular that this noble and important picture should be unsigned. Francia signed his pictures

¹ Francia died on the 5th January, 1517. I have unearthed, and shall presently produce evidence to show that this altar-piece was painted after 1511.



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THE CRUCIFIXION FROM ST. JOB'S, BOLOGNA

ATTRIBUTION OF THE PICTURE 9

freely, adding sometimes abundant detail, and not infrequently dating. This altar-piece is certainly the most considerable one of his without signature. That the picture is his there can, of course, be no manner of doubt. It suffices, as Mazzarosa has indicated, to compare the cherub at the feet of the Eternal Father in this picture with the cherub at the feet of the Crowning Saviour in his signed altar-piece in the Duomo of Ferrara, to see at once that the two works are by the same hand.¹ Look at the San Frediano altar-piece and see how awkwardly close the feet of the Franciscan are to the bottom of the picture. And then look again at the Ferrara altar-piece and see how much the

¹ A photograph of the Ferrara altar-piece is here reproduced so as to give the reader an opportunity of making the comparison. Francia's signature is on a small scroll near the Holy Innocent. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, "North Italy," I, 566, note 2, describe the Innocent—it is a picture of All Saints, too—as "the Infant Christ, foreshortened, with His head to the spectator." The position of the child, the wound in his head, the subject of the picture, the presence of Our Lord in glory, should have saved them from so droll an error. But the meaning of pictures is not a strong point with these learned writers.

greater space at the bottom of the picture adds to its natural freedom and majesty. It seems to me likely that when the picture arrived from the great painter's studio in Bologna it was, owing to some misunderstanding about measurements, found too long for its altar frame, and that some six inches of green sward, including the *cartellino* with Francia's signature, were ruthlessly sawn off. In this way only can one explain the absence of his signature on such an altar-piece. Francia is said to have been deeply devout: it was his almost invariable habit to sign his altar-pieces, no doubt in the hope that the priest, when saying Mass before the picture, might catch his name and remember him at the *Memento*, and that the people, too, might not forget him when praying before the altar.¹

What is the significance, the meaning of this sublime picture of Francia's? The writer of Baedeker's Guide calls it a *Coronation*,² so do Mrs.

¹ "Orate pro picture" appears at the base of several of Fra Bartolommeo's altar-pieces.

² Edition 1886, p. 365. To be on the safe side he omits all reference to the kneeling figure.



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THE ALTAR-PIECE IN THE DUOMO, FERRARA

Ady,¹ Dr. Williamson,² and myself³ (I regret to say) among English folk, Woltmann and Woermann⁴ among the Germans, and Tommaso Trenta,⁵ the Marchese Antonio Mazzarosa,⁶ and Professor Enrico Ridolfi,⁷ author of the modern guide, among the Lucchesi. The merest glance at the picture is surely sufficient to dispel such a notion. The picture might conceivably be an *Incoronata*, never a Coronation, for the Virgin here is already crowned, and in all pictures of the Coronation proper, the Crown is in the act of being placed on her head. The writer of Murray's excellent Handbook⁸ is still further wide of the mark. He calls it an Assumption! So does John Addington

¹ "Mantegna and Francia," by Julia Cartwright, 1881, p. 91.

² "Francesco Raibolini, called Francia," 1901, p. 76.

³ "In Tuscany," 1901, p. 153.

⁴ "History of Painting," translated by Clara Bell, London, Kegan Paul, 1887, vol. ii, p. 415.

⁵ "Guida del Forestiere per la Città e il Contado di Lucca," Lucca, 1820, p. 97.

⁶ "Guida di Lucca," Lucca, 1843, p. 107.

⁷ "Guida di Lucca," Lucca, 1877 and 1899.

⁸ "Central Italy," edition of 1892, p. 159.

Symonds,¹ so do Crowe and Cavalcaselle,² Wilhelm Lübke³ and A. Seubert.⁴ An Assumption! But where are the supporting angels, where the wondering Apostles! Mr. Hare is more cautious. He calls it the *Reception of the Virgin into Heaven*,⁵ a conjunction, I suppose, of Assumption and Coronation. Dr. Jacob Burckhardt,⁶ our useful cicerone in many a gallery, says no more of this noble piece than that it "deserves attention," excellent advice, however, which I am following to the extent of a whole volume. The editors of the Lemonnier edition of Vasari (Florence, 1846-1857),⁷ and Gaetano Milanesi, who was one of them, in his later and even more monumental

¹ "The Renaissance in Italy: the Fine Arts," p. 221, note.

² "A History of Painting in North Italy," 1871, vol. i, p. 566.

³ "Geschichte der Italienischen Malerei," Stuttgart, 1878, vol. i, p. 449.

⁴ "Künstler Lexicon," vol. i.

⁵ "Central Italy," vol. i, p. 62. St. Anthony he describes as "a monk standing by the tomb filled with flowers." The monk is a friar and is kneeling, not standing; the flowers are outside, not inside, the marble structure which he calls a tomb.

⁶ "The Cicerone, or Art Guide to Painting in Italy," London, Murray, 1873, p. 96, 1.

⁷ Vol. vi, p. 19.

edition (Florence, 1878-1882),¹ describe this picture as *Our Lady Assumed into Heaven receiving the Benediction of the Eternal Father*. But in what representation in art is there ever a blessing given with a sceptre or a rod, and not with the right hand? It is certainly disconcerting to find that writers such as these, and some of the others I have cited, can err so readily in the face of a representation which the painter has been at particular pains not to leave obscure. But this chapter is descriptive and not critical, and having done with description I pass on to the meaning of the picture.

¹ Vol. iii, p. 555.

II

THE MEANING OF THE PICTURE

THIS altar-piece of Francia can, of course, signify no other thing than the Conception, nay the Immaculate Conception, of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The texts on the scrolls tell us that surely enough. Saint Anselm even uses the word Conception in all its letters, and yet men of learning, men of habits of careful thought, talk confidently of a Coronation and an Assumption. There is little enough excuse for it. Many of them saw the picture over an Altar: they did but need to turn to the nearest praying peasant-woman and ask what Altar this was, to be told the Altar of the Conception. Then one writer, at least, who deserved to be consulted, has correctly enough called the picture *la Concezione di Nostra Donna*.

¹ Michele Ridolfi. "Scritti d'Arte e d'Antichità in Lucca." Florence, 1879. Edited by his son Enrico Ridolfi who, in spite of the father's warning calls the picture a Coronation. First edition, 1844.

Mrs. Jameson, too, whose works cannot be too attentively studied, whose opinions deserve to be carefully weighed before being rejected, expressly repudiates the idea that such a picture could be an Assumption or a Reception of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven.¹ She will not however have it a Conception "so styled by ecclesiastical authority," to use her quaint old-fashioned phrase,² but considers it "the election or predestination of Mary as the Immaculate vehicle or tabernacle of human redemption—the earthly parent of the Divine Saviour."³ Here she comes near at least to the true meaning of the altar-piece. Pictures of the kind, she adds, date from the beginning of the sixteenth century; pictures of the Conception only from the beginning of the seventeenth century. "Although, as representations, so very similar, yet the intention and meaning are different. In the Conception it is the sinless Virgin in her personal

¹ "Memoirs of Early Italian Painters," London, Murray, 1874, p. 148 (note). First edition, 1845.

² "Legends of the Madonna," second edition, London, Longmans, 1857, p. 51. First edition, 1852.

³ *Ibid.*, p. lxxiv.

character who is held up to reverence as the purest, wisest, holiest, of created beings. The earlier theme involves a yet more recondite signification. It is, undoubtedly, to be regarded as an attempt on the part of the artist to express, in a visible form, the idea or promise of the redemption of the human race, as existing in the Sovereign Mind before the beginning of things. They do not personify this idea under the image of Christ,—for they conceived that, as the second person of the Trinity, He could not be His own instrument,—but by the Image of Mary surrounded by those attributes which were afterwards introduced into pictures of the Conception. . . . This is the proper interpretation of those effigies, so prevalent in every form of art during the sixteenth century, and which are often, but erroneously, styled the Immaculate Conception.”¹ How profound, and how well said! That Mrs. Jameson is entirely wrong, that these pictures represent the Immaculate Conception merely, is sufficiently proved by the fact that they only exist as altar-pieces painted for altars of the Conception. Fancy an altar dedicated to “the idea

¹ “Legends of the Madonna,” p. 51.

or promise of the Redemption . . . before the beginning of things." Still a statement such as this of hers should at least have made it for ever impossible for any one who came after her to style Francia's altar-piece in San Frediano an Assumption, a Coronation, or a Reception of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven!

There is one feature certainly in the picture which might reasonably mystify—the action of the Eternal Father. He does not crown; He does not bless; lovingly, with obviously intense meaning—just look again for a moment at the picture—He touches the head of the Virgin with a rod. What is the significance of the rod? The conventional writers on art are one and all silent on the subject, and disconcerting as it may be, one can but attribute their silence to ignorance. Yet in face of the references to the Conception on the scrolls, the rod can obviously be no other thing than the sceptre of Ahasuerus with all its mystical significance. You remember the touching and beautiful scene in the Book of Esther where the Queen, saviour of her people, is exempted from the edict of general destruction. She is, in the

liturgy, a type of the Blessed Virgin, who, Immaculate in her Conception, was, by Divine Providence, exempted from the general law by which all mankind are born in original sin. Let us turn for a moment to the Book of Esther. There we read: "Quid habes, Esther? Ego sum frater tuus, noli metuere. Non morieris: *non enim pro te sed pro omnibus haec lex constituta est.* Accede igitur et tange sceptrum. Cum illa reticeret, tulit auream virgam, et posuit super collum ejus. . . ."¹ The picture, therefore, undoubtedly represents, not merely the Conception, but the Immaculate Conception, a dogma which during the Pontificate of the Franciscan Pope, Sixtus IV (1471-1484), grew greatly in popularity and gained great ground, and this picture of Francia's might even be the earliest representation of the Immaculate Conception in Art.

So I thought until I once more examined an

¹ Esther, xv, 12-15. "What ails thee, Esther? I am thy brother, fear naught. Thou shalt not die: *not for thee was this law made, but for all mankind.* Approach therefore and touch my sceptre. And as she held her peace, he took the golden sceptre and laid it upon her neck."

entirely similar picture of unknown authorship, now in the Pinacoteca, but formerly existing in the Church of San Francesco at Lucca. I must have seen the picture half a dozen times; I can never have looked at it once. What a surprise it was! Even the photograph of it which I reproduce will enable the reader to judge that it is quite a quarter of a century older than the Francia altar-piece. Francia, therefore, has literally lifted the whole idea of his sublime treatment from this ancient picture. Here are King Solomon, King David, Saint Augustine and Saint Anselm, holding scrolls with precisely the same words as in the Francia picture. Between them also kneels, with upward gaze, a Franciscan Friar. At the foot of each figure is a label with the name; the Franciscan is labelled Saint Anthony of Padua. Above, surrounded by adoring angels, sits Our Lord—not the Eternal Father—in the selfsame attitude, extending the same life-giving sceptre of Ahasuerus over the Blessed Virgin, who kneels at His feet. The old picture is more symbolical, more liturgical, richer in ideas than the newer. One may see in it the Cedar of Lebanon, the



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THE ALTAR-PIECE FROM SAN FRANCESCO
LUCCA

Cypress of Mount Sion, the Palm of Cades, the paradisaical pomegranate, the Rose-garden of Jericho, all typical of the glories of Mary. On the marble parapet, clearly discernible in the photograph under a lens is written: PLANTATIO ROSE IN HIERICO; on one of the jars is the word MIRRA, on the other BALSAMUM.¹ On the scroll peculiar to Our Lord are those familiar words from the book of Esther which I have just quoted: NON ENIM PRO TE SED PRO OMNIBUS HEC LEX CONSTITUTA EST. On Our Lady's scroll is written: ERUISTI A FRAMEA DEUS ANIMAM MEAM,² words which occur in the first authorized Office of the Conception (1477), of which Office, and another, more anon. Saint Anthony, silent in Francia's picture, is strangely eloquent here, for

¹ "Quasi cedrus exaltata sum in Libano, et quasi cypressus in Monte Sion: Quasi palma exaltata sum in Cades, et quasi plantatio rosae in Jericho: . . . Sicut cinnamomum et balsamum aromatizans odorem dedi: quasi myrrha electa dedi suavitatem odoris."—*Ecclesiasticus*, xxiv, 17, 18, 20.

"Emissiones tuae paradus malorum punicorum cum pomorum fructibus."—*Cant. Cantic.*, iv, 13.

² Psalm xxi, 21 (Authorized Version, xxii, 20). "Thou hast delivered, O God, my soul from the sword."

he has borrowed well-known and famous words from another great son of Saint Francis, John Duns Scotus: VIDETUR PROBABILE QUOD EST EXCELLENTIUS ATTRIBUERE MARIE.¹ This is altogether startlingly singular. Saint Anthony is in no way associated with the development of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception; there is not a single reference to the subject in his writings, nor any saying of his that can be, or has been, twisted into a reference; the Friars Minor did not begin to preach the doctrine till seventy or eighty years after his death (*ob.* 1231). How then comes he to figure in a picture glorifying the Immaculate

¹ *Opera Omnia*, Paris, 1894. Vol. XIV. In III Sent. Dist. 3, Quaest. 1. The "Quaestio" has also been separately printed in Vol. III of the "Bibliotheca Franciscana Scolastica medii aevi," Quaracchi, 1904, together with the invaluable treatises of William of Ware (Guglielmus Guarra) and Peter Aureolus. Scotus in the "Quaestio" discusses three possibilities: that the Blessed Virgin was never tainted by original sin; that she was for one instant only in sin; that she was for some short time in sin before being completely sanctified. If it be not against the authority of Holy Church or Holy Scripture, he considers it probable that the more excellent of these three states should be attributed to Mary ("excellentius est attribuere Mariae").

Conception? One cannot allege ignorance on the part of the painter. This altar-piece was painted for the Confraternity of the Conception founded in San Francesco about 1477; it must have been inspired, designed, and controlled by Franciscans themselves.¹ The liturgy, the theology, is without flaw. It is impossible to imagine the friars of San Francesco who had been under the influence of Fra Paolo da Lucca (Paolo Jova), a great champion of the doctrine and author of a "Symbola de Conceptione Beatae Mariae,"² it is impossible, I say, to imagine these friars, full of the subject, introducing Saint Anthony of Padua into a picture of the Conception, and making him use words which would be familiar as being those of Scotus even to their theological students of the first year. The only reasonable theory is that the kneeling figure is intended for Duns Scotus

¹ There were some excellent miniaturists among the friars of San Francesco between 1480 and 1540. Professor Campetti, Director of the Lucca Pinacoteca, holds the extremely probable theory that the old picture is by one of them.

² P. Heribert Holzapfel O.F.M., "Bibliotheca Franciscana de Immaculata Conceptione B.V.M." Quaracchi, 1904, p. 93.

himself! The year of grace 1908 marks the celebration of the sixth centenary of his death. His Order, under the vigorous guidance of the Postulator-General, Padre Paolini, are working hard for his formal beatification, which it is piously hoped may be secured ere many years have gone by. This picture would be a valuable bit of evidence in proof of past honours paid him, for he is put on a level with Anselm, Augustine, and David, and granted the halo of Saint (note, in passing, that King Solomon has been denied the halo: Francia by leaving out halos altogether preaches less, and courteously softens an uncomfortable situation). Consider the very marked and significant treatment of the Franciscan figure. The two kings and the two saints stand bearing witness upon earth to the truth of the Immaculate Conception: the little friar looks up into Heaven, he sees the vision, divines the dogma, and, in the old picture, proclaims it upon earth. Most assuredly there is some good reason for assigning a central and a marked position to the kneeling Franciscan.

But is that kneeling figure really John Duns?

I answer without any hesitation—yes.¹ Still there are two pieces of evidence against the alluring theory which I must not neglect to consider. Each of the five figures, as I have said, bears on a scroll at foot, most legibly, his name, and the name assigned to the central figure is Anthony of Padua. That is one piece of evidence, damning enough if things went by rote in the Middle Ages. Then there is the undoubted fact that the kneeling figure holds in his hand the emblem of Saint Anthony, the flame of fire, and this would appear upon first thoughts to make it decisive that, in spite of the eloquent scroll, the friars really did

¹ It is as well to confess that I am a fellow-countryman of the Subtle Doctor, for I cannot away with the arguments of Father Luke Wadding (of County Waterford!) that this Scotsman was an Irishman. I hold to the old distich:

“Scotia me genuit, Anglia me suscepit;
Gallia me docuit, Colonia me tenet.”

John (Christian name) Duns (Latin abbreviation of his native town or village) Scotus (a Scotsman) was born in 1274 and died at Cologne in 1308, aged only thirty-four. Any speculation as to who was the greatest intellect that ever lived is idle, but in any such speculation the name of Scotus would assuredly be freely mentioned.

intend, for some unfathomable reason, to represent Saint Anthony rather than the first great champion of the Immaculate Conception whose name springs unbidden to the mind at the bare mention or thought of the dogma. But men were ingenious and subtle in the Middle Ages, skilled in attaining an end which they seemed not to attain. It would have been natural and fitting, but it would have been rash in the extreme in 1480 to represent the uncanonized Scotus with a halo among canonized Saints. So the friars, resorting to a ruse, wrote underneath the name of Saint Anthony, but introduced the words of Scotus to show all friars, present and to come, who really was intended by that little Franciscan. Saint Anthony would be found more than any other Franciscan Saint to fit the figure, as he and Scotus were much of an age, Anthony thirty-six, John Duns thirty-four. That Francia knew whom he was depicting I shall prove in the fourth chapter of this book, to my own satisfaction at all events. Suffice it here to call attention to the fact that in Francia's picture, far more than in the other, the Franciscan directly *sees* the vision of the dogma. The white habit, too,

may have significance: it may signify the purity of heart, the clarity of mind of him who sees the divine revelation. In any case I venture to claim with entire confidence that we must in the future call the kneeling Franciscan in both pictures, not Anthony of Padua, the Seraphic thaumaturgist, but John Duns Scotus, the Subtle Doctor.¹

The one point of interest in this chapter to the conventional student of art is the fact, here luminously proved, that Francia took the idea, nay, the very design of one of his finest pictures, straight away and wholesale from the work of another painter. He has changed the colour of the vestments, he has clad his Bishops in albs instead of rochets, he has put in the hand of Saint Anselm, by a happy touch, the Archiepiscopal Cross of Jurisdiction rather than the Crosier, he has rightly

¹ The flame has long since ceased to be the emblem of Saint Anthony. It might most fittingly be adopted as the emblem of Duns Scotus when he comes to be raised to the Altars of the Church. In this picture Francia has presented the Order with an ideal type of Scotus. I fear the white habit is a bungle of the restorer rather than anything else, for it is exactly of the same hue and texture as the Bishops' albs, which should be of fine linen, and must have been painted as fine linen by Francia.

substituted the Eternal Father for the Son, and he has softened and sweetened the whole picture in his own inimitable way, eliminating accessories, and concentrating himself on essentials. But he has added nothing to the order of ideas, and appears to stand convicted of wholesale plagiarizing. Tommaso Trenta¹ considers that the old picture is an attempt at a copy of Francia's, made by some surviving artist of the old school. The thing, of course, is utterly impossible; I do but mention it to exhaust my subject. Even a follower of the old school would not, in copying, have put back the shape of the mitre by a quarter of a century.² Then I may just mention that the Government Inventory of Works of Art in Lucca describes the old altar-piece as of the sixteenth century, and says it is attributed to one of the sons of Francia!³ This simply for the sake of

¹ "Guida," p. 84.

² Observe that the mitres in Francia's picture have emerged from the quasi-Gothic form, and are already tending towards the majestically imposing Roman shape.

³ The Inventory is at Rome. I take the above from a synopsis preserved in the Record Office at Lucca: "Prospetto dei Monumenti ed Oggetti d'Arte esistenti nella Provincia di

registering all that there is to be said about the old picture.

One other theory remains to be dismissed as soon as stated. Could the old picture possibly be an early work of Francia, the earliest known picture, when he was still entirely "aurifex," and only struggling to be "pictor"? His first dated work is of the year 1490, when he was already forty years old. The San Francesco altar-piece, as I shall show, is of the year 1480, there or thereabouts. Why might not Francia at thirty years of age have already been painting? The old picture is undoubtedly very decorative; Solomon's cloak particularly smacks of the goldsmith: it is altogether a noble picture, finely designed, richly coloured, loftily conceived, in every way worthy of a master hand. The theory is tempting simply because it would make Francia executor of perhaps the first conception of the Immaculate Conception in Art. But it is idle even to state such a theory. The old picture is assuredly the work of

Lucca." The "Prospetto" assigns Francia's own picture to the fifteenth century! In other words the older is said to be the newer!

a man in the full maturity of his powers. It cannot represent a step in the artistic development of such a painter as Francia became. Francia certainly underwent changes, but his style from the beginning was "new"; he never underwent any change from old to new, only from new to newer.

As for the fact that Francia took his lofty idea from another painter, that is most easily, naturally, and honourably explained. It is likely enough that the old altar-piece in San Francesco speedily acquired fame and favour as a picture inspiring devotion, or as a picture before which great graces might be obtained, or as a miracle picture. People at the time were much wrought up about the Conception of Our Lady, and the Lucchesi from even an earlier date have been famous for their devotion to the dogma. One thing is quite certain, that the person who gave the order for Francia's picture must have wished for one "like" the old one for some altar of the Conception. What more natural then that Francia should have executed the order? This would relieve him entirely of stealing a good idea for his own glory. He simply

did one "like" to satisfy some person's devotion, "like," yet how unlike!¹

¹ There is no evidence that Francia ever was in Lucca, only Vasari's evidence that he worked for Lucca. It would now almost seem natural that he came to Lucca to see this picture, and yet he may merely have been furnished with a sketch. His own picture, of course, he would almost certainly have painted in his studio at Bologna.

III

THE INSPIRING SOURCES OF THE PICTURE

I THINK I have made it plain that this altarpiece of Francia's represents not merely the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, but the Immaculate Conception. The scroll held by King Solomon is evidence sufficient (*TOTA PULCHRA ES . . . ET MACULA NON EST IN TE*), but we are most of all certified of the fact by our knowledge of the significance of Ahasuerus' sceptre—Not for thee is this law but for all mankind. These words cannot be intended to mean that the Virgin's privilege was Sanctification before birth, for St. John the Baptist¹ and Jeremiah the Prophet² were both likewise thus privileged: here it is obviously question of a unique privilege. Here they can only be intended to convey that all mankind was

¹ Luke, i, 15, 41, 44.

² Jeremiah, i, 5.

conceived in sin, save only one woman. Gravois¹ has said truly, so far as I know, that no one ever yet heard of miracles worked or graces obtained by express devotion to the Virgin cleansed from original sin, that no one ever yet heard of Cities, Provinces, Kingdoms, Religious Orders expressly placing themselves under the Protection of Our Lady Sanctified. Never yet, he says, has there been a Confraternity of Our Lady conceived in the order of nature, nor ever yet an Indulgence granted to such a devotion, nor has any Supreme Pontiff ever encouraged or blessed such a devotion. All these things have only been done in the name of Mary Immaculate, Conceived in Grace. These reflections of Père Gravois' suggest to me another quite noteworthy reflection: that never yet was there an altar-piece of the Conception of the Virgin that is not an Immaculate Conception. When the Immaculate Conception first appeared in art (1477-1480), it never seems to have occurred to the powerful and influential opponents of the privilege to attempt pictures in

¹ "De Ortu et Progressu Cultus ac Festi Imm. Concept. B.D.G.V.M." Lucca, 1764. Art. Ult. § 260. A fine book.

accord with their theory. The man who should find an altar-piece or picture showing, in conscious and deliberate opposition to the privilege, a presentment of the Blessed Virgin Conceived in Sin, would have discovered the greatest curiosity in the whole range of religious pictures. Even art would seem to have conspired to teach us with Duns Scotus that "excellenti^{us} est attribuere *Mariae*."

A few facts culled from that most fascinating page in the history of the development of Christian Doctrine, the Immaculate Conception, are, perhaps, necessary to a right understanding of the importance and significance of Francia's altar-piece.

The Church was extraordinarily backward in recognizing a Feast of the Conception.¹ The feast was certainly celebrated in the East as

¹ For a succinct, clear, and critical history of the Feast, see Dr. K. A. H. Kellner's altogether admirable work, "Heortologie, oder das Kirchenjahr und die Heiligenfeste in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung." Freiburg, Herder, 1901. There is an excellent Italian translation, "L'Anno Ecclesiastico," by the Rev. Dr. Angelo Mercati. Rome, Desclée, 1906. For

early as the eighth century. Here it was called the Conception of Saint Anne and celebrated on the 9th December. By the year 1166, in the so-called Eastern Empire, it had become a holiday of obligation recognized by the State. The Feast first penetrated to the West in Southern Italy and Sicily and Sardinia, precisely because these territories formed part of what is styled the Byzantine Empire. The Normans on their conquest of Sicily and South Italy found the Feast in vigour, found it and loved it, and introduced it into Normandy. So much did they make this Feast their own, that we of the West came to speak of it as the "*festum nationis normannicae*." From Normandy it easily crossed the Channel and passed into England. It was introduced into the Abbey of Ramsey in the Diocese of Worcester by Abbot Helsinus between the years 1080 and 1087, how

information regarding the devotion in early England, see FF. Thurston and Slater's edition of Eadmer's "*Tractatus de Conceptione Sanctae Mariae*." Freiburg, Herder, 1904. Also extremely interesting articles by Father Thurston, "Abbot Anselm of Bury and the Immaculate Conception," in the "Month" of June, 1904, and "The Legend of Abbot Elsi," in the July, 1904, number of the same magazine.

and why we will learn presently. Saint Anselm (*ob.* 1109) greatly favoured the feast. Anselm the Younger established it in Bury Saint Edmunds, 1128-1129. But it was slow in spreading from abbeys and monasteries, to cathedrals and parish churches. Exeter, in the year 1287, seems to be the first See to impose the Feast on the whole Diocese. Anglo-Saxons may be justly proud of the leading share they took in establishing a festival which even the reformers could not root out of the Anglican Calendar. In devotion to this most beautiful feast, the zeal of Canterbury outstripped Rome, as surely as the nimble feet of Saint John the Divine outran the steady, sure, long-distance pace of Saint Peter, the first Pope. About 1140, we find that devout lover of Mary, the mellifluous Saint Bernard, sharply reproving the Canons of Lyons for having introduced a novel festival unsanctioned by Rome,¹ while Alvarus Pelagius writing in 1330-1332, states, indeed, that

¹ Ep. 174. "Celebritatem, quam ritus ecclesiae nescit, non probat ratio, non commendat antiqua traditio," strong words, but he adds still stronger: "Non est hoc Virginem honorare, sed honori detrudere."

a Feast was celebrated in Saint Mary Major on the 8th December, but that it was a Feast of Our Lady's Sanctification, not of her Conception.¹

The tardy approval given to this Festival by Rome, Mother and Mistress of Churches, is most comprehensible, and to-day excites our wonder and admiration. The issue involved was one of infinite moment, of Divine Revelation in fact. Once approve a Feast of the Conception, and the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception is a foregone conclusion: so must deep-thinking Rome have pondered *in petto* throughout the ages. For the Church can only celebrate what is holy. Of all her Saints she only celebrates one birthday, that of St. John the Baptist, because all men and Saints are born in sin, and he alone, among Saints, was sanctified in his mother's womb. Her other Saints she commemorates on the day of their Death or Transitus which procured them instant

¹ "De Planctu Ecclesiae." Venice, 1560. Fol. 110 a.b. Alvarus Pelagius, though an ardent Friar Minor, was opposed to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which he calls a new-fangled doctrine. He also speaks of the Feast as never having been approved, only tolerated, "maxime in Anglia."

Sanctification in Heaven. Thus, too, she could not celebrate a Conception stained with the blot of original sin, for that would be tantamount to celebrating the Feast of a thing not holy.¹ So great an issue needed centuries in which to come to fruit.

In contemplating the mystic original deposit of the Christian Faith we seem to see two things, separate in themselves, but united in their nature and essence—seeds and fruit. The essential dogmas, necessary to the persecuted and catacomb life of the first Christians, were given from the beginning in the form of ripe fruit that might nourish and sustain: in the great mediæval days to come, the stately days of a public, recognized, united Universal Church, there is no need for the exceptional manna of the wilderness. The seeds have become blossoms, have blossomed into devotions which beautify, magnify, exalt, attract. The grain of the Immaculate Conception, tiniest of all

¹ I do not forget the old and long since obsolete Feast of the Conception of Saint John, celebrated on the 24th September. The object was to do honour to his Sanctification before birth. But the name was unfortunately chosen, and, since there never could be any question with him of a Conception in grace, the name itself was instrumental in killing the Feast.

seeds in the original deposit of the Faith, so tiny indeed as to need the expert's eye and eye-lens to discover it at all, this seed has, in the fifteenth century, grown into a stately tree covered with richest blossoms. In the nineteenth century this same tree is abundantly bearing ripest fruit, for the Church has once more entered upon a recon-dite, unrecognized, persecuted life, which once more needs the Heaven-sent manna of the wilderness. I should suppose that the impartial student of religious history would regard the Definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception—defined, too, by a Pope without Council—as the strongest evidence of, humanly speaking, inexplicable vitality, ever manifested by the Catholic Church. The Definition of Papal Infallibility pales before it: the seeds of Papal Infallibility very soon took the form of fruit, and from the first are discernible even to the unpractised eye:¹ this Definition was, humanly speaking, far more

¹ "The seeds of Popery were sown even in the Apostles' time." (Bishop Newton's *Dissertation on the Prophecies*, vol. iii, chap. 10, p. 148.) Quoted by De Maistre in "Du Pape," Conclusion, § viii, note 4.

certain to come, far more easily gathered from Holy Writ and the Unwritten Divine Word, than the Dogma of Mary Virgin Conceived in Grace.

But did the Greeks, the Sicilians, the Normans, and our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, did Abbot Helmsinus, did Anselm the elder and Anselm the Younger, really believe in the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, or merely intend to honour the Sanctification in the womb? I am here hardly concerned with that question. One thing is certain, that all Christians before them, and all Catholic Christians after them, believed Mary to be Immaculate, that is to say, sanctified before birth, and sinless unto death. The dispute that arose related only to the *moment* in which this sanctification began.¹

That great light among the Sons of Saint Francis, John Duns Scotus, ennobled in successive ages by the highest attribute that can be given to the intellect of man, Subtle, the Subtle Doctor, was, I think, the first theologian, or at all events the greatest among the first, to formulate the

¹ "The Mother of Jesus," by J. Herbert Williams, London, Kegan Paul, 1906, chap. viii, p. 258.

question and to answer: that the moment of Sanctification was in the very instant of Conception, that the Mother of Christ was in very deed never sanctified, because *sine labe originali concepta*.

POTUIT:

DECUIT:

ERGO FECIT.

This is the syllogism of his which eventually subdued the Schools and captured the University of Paris. Scotus' Order took up the cause of the Privilege with true Seraphic ardour, and with the advent of the Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484), the eventual triumph of the Cause was assured.¹

¹ The Feast had already been celebrated in the whole Order since 1263. See decision of General Chapter in "Chronologia Historico-Legalis Seraphici Ordinis," Naples, 1650, vol. i, p. 27.

A fascinating book on Scotus by P. Marianus Fernandez Garcia, O.F.M., has lately been produced at the Quaracchi Press in honour of the Centenary: "Mentis in Deum Quotidiana Elevatio duce Doctore Subtili et Mariano B. Ioanne Duns Scoto O.F.M." In Part II, extracts from the writings of Scotus are given for every day in the year according to the Romano-Seraphic Calendar, and in Part I extracts for all Sundays, holidays and special feasts. The whole is preceded by

Sixtus IV was the first Pope to sanction an Office (*Sicut lilium*), and a Mass (*Egredimini*), of the Immaculate Conception. This was in 1477. He did not impose either, but he endowed both with Indulgences, and both soon began to find their way into Breviary and Missal. There they remained until Pius V reformed the Service Books, when both Office and Mass were expunged (1568-1570). But Pius V, in a sense, did more than Sixtus IV. If he abolished the existing Office and Mass, which were purely voluntary and only to be found in certain books, it was to make compulsory on clerics an Office and Mass of the Conception, identical with the Office and Mass of the Nativity, save that the word "Conception" was to be substituted for the word "Nativity" wherever that occurred. The lessons of the first two nocturns, however, were proper of the Conception.¹ The Friars Minor, however, obtained leave

the most satisfactory attempt as yet made to write a life of the Subtle Doctor.

¹ "*In festo Conceptionis B. Mariae. Omnia praeter lectiones primi et secundi nocturni dicuntur ut in Nativitate ejusdem mutato nomine Nativitatis in nomen Conceptionis. In primis*

from Pope Pius V to use the Office and Mass sanctioned by Sixtus IV,¹ and, with some slight changes, they continued to use both until the new Office and Mass, written for the solemn definition of the Dogma in 1854, became the general use.

The Office and Mass sanctioned by Sixtus IV in his Constitution *Cum prae excelsa*, dated 27th February, 1477, were written by Leonardo Nogarolo of Verona, Protonotary Apostolic and Secretary to the Pope. Père Gravois gives a list of twenty-nine Breviaries and fifty-three Missals, extending from 1478 to 1566, in which this Office and Mass may be found.² Sixtus IV attached the same indulgences to those who recited the Office or said the Mass, or who attended the Mass and the Canonical Hours, as were granted for the like pious acts on *Corpus Domini*. P. Candido Mariotti recounts that the Franciscans, in many provinces, did not say Matins and Lauds at midnight on this

vesperis omnia de Conceptione cum commemoratione Sancti Ambrosi."—*Rubric*.

¹ "La Donna dell' Apocalisse," by Fra Michel' Angelo da Bibbiena, Lucca, 1712, p. 284. A fascinating book.

² "De Ortu." Appendices 6 and 7.

Feast, but after First Vespers, so that it might be possible for the Faithful to attend and gain the Indulgences.¹ The new Office, which is a fine liturgical performance, has, however, no proper hymns. Nogarolo has been content with the "Ave Maris Stella" for Vespers, the "Quem terra, pontus, aethera" for Matins, and the "O gloriosa" for Lauds. His noble Collect has survived, and is, with scarcely perceptible verbal changes, the Collect used in the modern Office of the Immaculate Conception.²

In 1480 another very remarkable Office and Mass of the Conception were written. The author was Fra Bernardino of the Order of Friars Minor Observantins, scion of a distinguished Milanese family, the Busti.³ Fra Bernardino was in his day a

¹ "L'Immacolata Concezione di Maria ed i Francescani," Quaracchi, 1904, p. 135.

² It could scarcely be improved upon: *Oremus*. Deus, qui per immacolatam Virginis conceptionem dignum Filio tuo habitaculum preparasti; concede quaesumus: ut sicut ex morte ejusdem Filii tui praevisa eam ab omni labe preservasti: ita nos quoque mundos ejus intercessione ad te pervenire concedas. Per eundem Dominum nostrum. Amen.

³ Not of Busto, a place in Lombardy, as Fabricius and others among the learned have imagined. See Argelat.,

very famous preacher, and at all times an enthusiastic champion of Our Lady's privilege. When he presented his Office and Mass to Sixtus IV, humbly begging that it might be examined by some learned theologian, the Pope replied that he would himself be the examiner. The Office and Mass were approved by Brief under the Fisherman's Ring, dated 4th October (Feast of Saint Francis), 1480, and the same Indulgences were attached to them as to the Office and Mass of Leonardo Nogarolo. Leave to recite the Office was not confined to the Franciscans, but extended to "omnes qui id voluerint." The Office of Bernardino de' Busti is printed in his "Mariale" (Milan, 1493), a work which has become exceedingly scarce. The "Patres Editores" of Quaracchi, who have done so many noble services to scholars, reprinted the Mass and Office in 1904, and, worth its weight in gold though it be in illustrating this subject, it can be bought for the insignificant sum of thirty centimes.¹ Would that

"Bibliotheca Scriptorum Mediolanensium," Milan, 1745, I, ii, 244.

¹ "Officium et Missa de Immaculata Conceptione B. M. V.

somebody had also thought of reprinting Leonardo Nogarolo's Office and Mass! The liturgy of the Conception and the Immaculate Conception, still needs treatment as a separate subject, voluminously and critically. For instance, I do not think that a single example of the rare Office of the Sanctification has ever been printed.

In Bernardino's Office there are proper hymns for Vespers, Matins and Lauds, and also, if halting here and there in its quantities, a very beautiful Sequence for the Mass.¹ Bernardino has pro-

composita a Ven. Fr. Bernardino de Bustis, O.F.M." *Ad Claras Aquas* (Quaracchi), 1904.

¹ Here are some specimens of fine sentiment and bad metre:

Salve Sponsa Deitatis,
 Maria, fons pietatis,
 Angelorum Domina.

Tu magistra clementiae
 Mater Misericordiae,
 Nostra delens crimina.

Tu in coelis coronata
 Ab Angelis venerata,
 Micans super sidera.

Nos famulos rege tuos
 Atque tibi fac devotos
 Pro tua clementia.

vided nine lessons for the Feast, and nine lessons for every day of the Octave, seventy-two lessons altogether, a feat of extraordinary learning. As may be imagined these lessons are a veritable treasure-house of Marian science. Bernardino's Office, however, never made any headway, not even among the Franciscans, though it no doubt attracted a good deal of attention at the time of its composition, and under his influence may have been used in the Milan Province (of which he was Minister Provincial) until the time of his death (*circa* 1500). It is manifestly inferior to Nogarolo's work from the liturgical point of view, and that it never enjoyed any popularity in the Order is sufficiently evident from the fact that the Franciscans petitioned to retain the use of this, and not of their own Office, when Pius V expunged Office and Mass from Breviary and Missal. So utterly forgotten did it become that Gravois, the best historian of the cult, and Fra Michel' Angelo da Bibbiena, in his chapter on Sixtus IV, make no mention of Busti's Office.

I seem to be wandering far away from Francia's picture, but indeed I have really been leading

straight up to it. For both these Offices were inspiring sources of pictures of the Immaculate Conception. But in this case I think there can be no question that Bernardino's Office was the inspiring source of the old altar-piece in San Francesco. With the exception of the words of Duns Scotus which occur in neither Office, all the selections for the scrolls are to be found in the lessons, antiphons, responsories or versicles of both Offices, save only the quotation from Saint Augustine (*In coelo qualis est*, etc.) which occurs in Bernardino's Office alone. Thus the picture could not have been painted before 1480, the year in which the Office received papal approval. This seems to me proof positive as to the inspiring source, while a verse in the Vesper Hymn may actually have suggested the position of the two central figures, and it may have been in Lucca that the idea of Ahasuerus' sceptre first had birth in art as a means of illustrating the Immaculate Conception:

“ Assueri regis sceptrum
Caput tangens Virgo tuum
Mori fecit laqueatum
Aman sanctis inimicum.”

We may safely conclude, then, that the old altar-piece was not painted before October, 1480, though, from its style, very soon after, probably in the next year, and I think we may claim for it that it is the inspiring source, the Mother and Mistress of all pictures of the Immaculate Conception in which a sceptre is used. The painter—almost certainly a Friar of the Lucca Convent—drew from Bernardino, and Francia, under orders, drew from the painter. Possibly the old altar-piece is the most ancient representation of the Immaculate Conception that has survived.¹

One other point. Bernardino in his Offices quotes David, Solomon, Anselm and Augustine; and he magnifies Duns Scotus in a place of honour,² saying that he “was destined by Our Lord Jesus Christ to defend the dignity of His Mother.” Of Saint Anthony of Padua there is

¹ The Altar of the old “Cappella del Coro” (founded by Sixtus IV and pulled down in 1609) was dedicated in 1479 to the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, to Saint Francis of Assisi, and Saint Anthony of Padua. There was no altar-piece properly so called, but the fresco above the Altar was by Perugino.

² Not within the Octave, but in the fourth lesson of the Feast.

not a word. Now if the Office of Bernardino be the inspiring source of the old picture (as unquestionably it is), if David, Solomon, Anselm and Augustine, passed from it into the picture, then is it not more than ever evident that that little kneeling figure is, not Saint Anthony as he is called, but John Duns Scotus, Doctor Subtilis and Doctor Marianus. So at least I intend for the future to call him, both in speaking of this picture and the Francia, and if I can but convince the guide-books that he is not Peter Igneus, as they tell travellers, some little thing will have been done for his honour and glory in this year of the sixth centenary.

Lucca possesses the oldest known Altar dedicated to the Conception; it preserves the oldest known Bull relating to the Conception; it claims to have the oldest known Confraternity of the Conception in all Italy, and the oldest Chaplaincy of the Conception; to a church in Lucca was granted the first Indulgence for devotion to the Conception; Lucca raised the first known column in honour of the Conception, anticipating the famous column in the Piazza di Spagna by nearly

a hundred and seventy years,¹ and in Francia's altar-piece I claim for Lucca, without any fear of being gainsaid, the most beautiful picture of the Immaculate Conception ever yet painted by the hand of man. To this circlet of precious gems I now with reverent hand, mindful of all that she has given me, add yet another jewel and not the least of them—the oldest known picture of the Immaculate Conception, for such assuredly is the altar-piece from San Francesco.

¹ The Altar 1333, the Chaplaincy 1360, the Confraternity about the same time, the Indulgence 1387, the Column 1687. The Altar is in the lovely little Church of Santa Maria della Rosa; the Bull, dated 8th December, 1387, is preserved in the Archives of the Compagnia della Rosa; the Column is fittingly placed in front of San Francesco. The Bull was actually not known at the time of the Definition: it would have been a valuable bit of evidence to the Consultors. See Canon Almerico Guerra "Istoria della Miracolosa Immagine, Chiesa e Confraternità di Maria SS. della Rosa," Lucca, 1858. Also a valuable work which I hope its learned author may expand: "L'Immacolata a Lucca," by Canon Pietro Guidi, Pavia, 1905. Monsignor Guidi gives a facsimile of the wonderful Bull.

IV

THE PREDELLA OF THE PICTURE

I AM now free to attempt an explanation of the significance of the four exquisite little chiaroscuros in the predella.¹ In asking oneself what they can possibly mean, the natural thing to suppose is: incidents in the lives of the Saints above the Altar, were it not that there are five Saints and only four compartments. Still, seeing the marked position assigned to the kneeling figure, it might have been the painter's intention to emphasize all the more the fact that he is seeing a vision, by leaving him out among scenes which perhaps only bore witness. Of course most writers on art have kept discreetly silent about these pictures, or have confined themselves to praising their exquisite beauty. Not one, that I know of, has even had recourse to that favourite resource of the art-writer when baffled by the

¹ I regret that I cannot offer the reader more satisfactory reproductions. They are enlargements made at home of Alinari's excellent photograph.

meaning of a picture—elaborate, solemn description; not one, that is to say, has described to us what may be seen in these pictures. Mazzarosa and Kugler and Hare say not a word of any sort; “in a predella four monochromes,” suffices for Crowe and Cavalcaselle; Mrs. Jameson extols their “exquisite beauty;” to the Editors of Vasari they are a “sweet thing;” to Michele Ridolfi they are “the most gracious little figures imaginable.” What if they are gracious and sweet, exquisite and beautiful—that all of us can see for ourselves: but we want to know what the great artist is representing. There are men and women and children in the pictures: at least tell us what they are doing if you cannot tell us why they are doing it.

Some weighty writer, whom it must be the custom to regard as infallible, has started the theory that they relate to the history of the Augustinian Order. I have failed to trace the culprit but he has had a bad influence on others and deserves to be shown up. The writer of Murray's “Handbook to Central Italy,” for instance, says that they are “four scenes from the

foundation of the Augustinian Order," but he does not tell us what the scenes are. It would be interesting to know, in No. 1, how a number of Benedictines at a Conventual High Mass, or, in No. 2, how a Franciscan Friar standing in a bonfire, or, in No. 3, how a brawl and reconciliation between two laymen, or, in No. 4, some great excitement and wonder about a child, it would be interesting, I say, to know how these things can have anything to do with the foundation or history of the Augustinian Order, whether of Canons Regular or Hermit Friars. Mrs. Ady opens up a wider vista and holds that they are "scenes from the *history* of the Augustinian Order;" Baedeker is of the same opinion; Dr. Williamson holds that they are scenes from the *early* history of the Order. These three statements, so like yet so unlike, foundation, history, and early history, point to the original source being of a very puddled nature indeed.

I grant that it is not easy to make out what these pictures are, since a cursory glance shows that they cannot relate to the lives of the Saints above. But seeing that my reproductions are none

too clear, I will attempt a bald description before coming to their meaning.

In No. 1 there are two scenes (*a*) a ship at sea, first seen in the distance, then nearer land, with mast broken and sails and rigging flying; a mitred head is visible in the tightly packed terror-stricken crowd of passengers and men; Our Lady appears in the heavens above. (*b*) High Mass, with Deacon and Subdeacon; that the celebrant is a Bishop or Abbot is evident from the fact that the acolyte by the Altar is holding a Mitre; Benedictine monks in wide-sleeved surplices (no, not cowls) are assisting at the Mass; over the Altar is a picture; it would look as if the Bishop or Abbot were saying a Mass of thanksgiving for deliverance from shipwreck.

In No. 2 there are likewise two scenes, (*a*) a group of Religious and layfolk in argument; the most prominent figure is a Franciscan; a Dominican extends his arms in surprise or remonstrance; I can also see a Benedictine in his cowl; the Franciscan is obviously trying to convince somebody: (*b*) outside, a Franciscan stands in a bonfire; a small group gaze at him in wonder; Our Lady is in the heavens above.

In No. 3 there are perhaps three scenes, (*a*) a Cavalier threateningly draws his sword upon an unarmed man; (*b*) presently these two are kneeling in an embrace of reconciliation, the sword having been thrown on the ground; a few figures lean against the pillars of the loggia and look on, tranquilly admiring; (*c*) under the loggia a man is praying before a picture.

In No. 4 there are likewise three scenes: (*a*) a woman is sitting under a loggia, apparently on a roof, judging by the distant view not discernible in my reproduction; a child is walking away from her, holding a stick or some object in his hand; (*b*) a man and two women are grouped round the child, marvelling greatly; (*c*) a woman is praying before a picture; the child is lying on the floor clinging to the train of the woman's skirt.

There is nothing so peculiar as the extraordinary density that comes over the mind of man when he looks at a picture. As often as not he cannot see straight; more often than not the order of ideas gets itself completely inverted. So at least I found it in trying to make out the meaning of these little pictures. That they represented miracles it was

easy enough to see from the second glance, when I had abandoned the idea that they could be incidents from the lives of the Saints above. But what miracles among the myriad miracles worked in fifteen hundred years of Catholic history? Shall I ever be able to unearth and locate them? The task for a moment seemed hopeless.

I examined and considered the pictures over and over again, ever so carefully as I thought; but without result. These were the only gloomy moments I had in these delightful researches. It was my own fault. I was before a picture, and therefore suffering from that curious intellectual depravity which afflicts the best of us when we are trying to see a picture. A section of the order of ideas had got itself inverted: I left unexamined and examined last of all, that which it should have been my business to examine first of all, the only clue, the picture in the pictures. That in No. 1 is clearly visible: there is a sitting figure and a kneeling figure, the sitting figure apparently extends a rod over the kneeling figure. If only this is repeated in the other pictures! My hopes rose high: yes, sure enough, under a strong lens, the

picture in No. 3 and No. 4 reveals the same figures the same attitude, the same action of giving an accolade. Then at length the fog lifted, and all became clear as the noonday sun. This picture in the pictures was itself a representation of the Immaculate Conception. The prayers before it showed me that these were miracles worked by invoking Our Lady conceived without Sin, conceived in Grace. The invocation was still new in Francia's time. I need therefore only study the history of miracles for a hundred years or so, not for fifteen hundred, and I need only search for miracles worked by Our Lady Immaculate, and not by Our Lady generically, or under one of her many other designations. One of the miracles I recognize on the spot, for I know my Golden Legend and I know the elements, at least, of the history of the Immaculate Conception. It is the well-known story of how the Abbot Helsinus was miraculously saved from shipwreck on the condition that he should introduce the celebration of the Festival of the Conception into his Abbey of Ramsey. There is the imminent shipwreck clear enough, and there clear enough, surrounded by

his monks, is the Abbot celebrating a Mass of the Conception before a picture of the Conception. What a delight to discover thus unexpectedly that the great Bologna painter had painted a characteristic and famous incident in the making of the English liturgy. Of the other three pictures I can then and there make nothing whatsoever.

But owing to the commonsense practice of consulting theologians about the meaning of religious pictures rather than turning to the recognized authorities on art, I am advised to make search in that great Marian storehouse, Migne's "Summa Aurea de Laudibus Beatissimae Virginis." There sure enough in Dom Cimarolo's "Miranda Mariana,"¹ in Vol. XII, at Column 1108, I read the welcome title of No. XXXII: "Franciscanus Laicus defendens Immacolatam Conceptionem stat in flammis illaesus,"² and I am at once in possession of the miracle depicted in Chiaroscuro No. 2.

¹ "Miranda Mariana, sive mira ope Deiparae Beatae Mariae Virginis circa mortales patrata, a R.P. Ignatio Brentano Cimarolo, O.S.P. Benedicti in Monastero Banthensi professo."

² "A Franciscan lay-brother in defence of the Immaculate Conception goes through the ordeal of fire unscathed."

The remaining two miracles are likewise recounted by Dom Cimarolo, who gives the rare "Mariale" of Bernardino de'Busti as his authority. And so it happens that Bernardino, whose Office inspired the old picture in San Francesco, which in turn inspired Francia, was also the inspiring source of Francia's predella.

I will now proceed to an orderly narrative of the four miracles, But as regards No. 1 I cannot refrain from leaving aside the "Summa Aurea" and the "Mariale" and quoting instead the story of Abbot Helsinus as given in Caxton's ever fresh and delightful translation of the "Legenda Aurea."¹

No. 1

"Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury and pastor of England,² sendeth greeting and bene-

¹ "The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton." London, Dent (Temple Classics), vol. ii, pp. 126-128.

² The reader must beware of taking this letter as a genuine Encyclical of the great Archbishop: but I am not going to interrupt my narrative with a treatise on the subject.

diction in Our Lord perpetual unto the Bishops that be under me, and to all them that have remembrance of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of God.

“ Right dear brethren, how the Conception of the glorious Virgin Mary hath been showed sometime in England, in France, and in other countries by miracles I shall rehearse to you.

“ In the time that it pleased to God for to correct the people of England of their evils and sins, and to constrain them to his service, he gave victory in battle to William, the glorious Duke of Normandy, to win and conquer the realm of England. And after that he was King of the land, anon by the help of God, and of his prudence, he reformed the estates and dignities of Holy Church into better reformation than it had been. To which the Devil, enemy unto all good works had envy, and pained him to emperish and let the good works, as well by falseness of his servants as by encumbering of his strangers. For when the Danes heard say that England was subject unto the Normans, anon they made them ready to withstand it. When King William understood this, anon he sent the

Abbot of Rumsey, which was named Helsinus, into Denmark for to know the truth. This Abbot after that he had done well and diligently the charge of his commission, and that he was returned a great part of the sea homeward, anon arose a great tempest on the sea, in such wise that the cords and other habiliments of the ship brake. And the masters and governors of the ship, and all they that were therein, lost the hope and trust to escape the peril of this tempest, and all cried devoutly to the glorious Virgin Mary, which is comfort to the discomfited, and hope to the despaired, and recommended themselves in the keeping of God. And anon they saw coming tofore the ship, upon the water, an honourable person in the habit of a Bishop, which called the said Abbot in the ship, and said to him: Wilt thou escape these perils of the sea, and go home whole and safe to thy country? And the Abbot answered, weeping, that he desired that above all other things. Then said the Angel to him: Know that I am sent hither by Our Lady for to say to thee that if thou wilt hear me and do thereafter, thou shalt escape this peril of the sea. The Abbot

promised that gladly he would obey to that he should say. Then said the Angel: Make covenant to God, and to me, that thou shalt do hallow the Feast of the Conception of Our Lady, and of her creation, well and solemnly, and that thou shalt go and preach it. And the Abbot demanded in what time this feast should be kept. The Angel answered to him: The eighth day of December. And the Abbot demanded him what office and service he should take for the service in holy church. And the Angel answered: All the Office of the Nativity of Our Lady, save where thou sayest Nativity, thou shalt say, Conception,¹ and anon after the Angel vanished away and the tempest ceased. And the Abbot came home safely into his country with his company, and notified to all them that he might, that he had heard and seen. And, right dear sirs, if ye will arrive at the port of health, let us hallow devoutly the Creation and the Conception of the Mother of Our Lord, by whom

¹ The instructions, precisely, of the rubric in the Pius V, and subsequent Breviaries down to 1854. "Well and solemnly," indeed, does Abbot Helsinus hallow the Feast of the Conception of Our Lady in Francia's exquisite little sketch.

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THE CHIAROSCUROS. NOS. 1 AND 2

we may receive the reward of her son in the glory of paradise celestial.”¹

No. 2

“Certain priests of various Religious Orders, who once met upon a journey, began to talk of the Immaculate Conception, and each gave his own opinion. One of them denied that Mary was conceived without sin; another as strenuously affirmed her Immaculate Conception. As each obstinately kept to his own opinion, a lay-brother, socius of the Franciscan father, no longer able to stand by and hear Our Lady’s privilege impugned by the other Religious, in a moment of anger struck him, priest though he was, a swingeing blow (*validissimam alapam*). The Religious thus outraged was of a very noble family, whose house

¹ Migne, “Summa Aurea,” Vol. XII, Col. 1102, No. xxiv. FF. Thurston and Slater, *op. cit.*, give three versions of this story. It also forms Lessons V and VI of the Fourth day in Bernardino’s Office.

Francia has not introduced the venerable figure habited as a Bishop into his picture. He has preferred with finer feeling, and a didactic purpose, to introduce the Blessed Virgin who sent him.

was not far distant, and when the lay-brother heard that the Religious intended to be revenged upon him by means of his relations, he was greatly dismayed. But he put his trust in Our Lady Immaculate, and when a few days afterwards he appeared before the outraged priest's friends and relations, he declared fearlessly that he had not struck him out of malice, but only because he had so bitterly assailed the Immaculate Conception of the Most Pure Mother of God, the truth of which he undertook to prove then and there before them all. 'Light a big fire,' he said, 'and I promise to enter it with the priest whom I struck; whichever of us is consumed by the flames let his opinion be considered the false one.' The proposal was approved by all, and a large fire was soon lighted. The lay-brother, taking the priest by the hand, sought to lead him into the fire, but overcome by the horror of death, he utterly refused to move. The lay-brother then did not hesitate to enter the flames alone, calling upon the Immaculate Virgin in fervent prayer, imploring her that as she was created without the fire of sin, so might she keep

her poor servant unharmed in the flames. And it is a fact that he remained a long time without scathe of sort in the fire, repeatedly inviting the priest, though in vain, to join him in the midst of the flames. As may be easily imagined, so great a miracle converted the bystanders to belief in the absolute innocence of the Virgin Mother, and won for the lay-brother full pardon for the blow he had struck.”¹

No. 3

“A certain Italian, a citizen of Aquila, was greatly incensed against his dearest enemy, and overcome in the weakness of human nature by his wrath, he determined to kill him, when having

¹ Bern. de Busti, “*Mariale de Excellentiss Regine Celi. Impressum Mediolani per Magistrum Leonardum Pachel. Anno Domini MCCCCLXXXIIJ.*” The copy in the Quaracchi library is unpagged, but the folio number has been added in pencil. The above story is taken from “*Serm. de Concept.*,” viii, fol. 48a, and appears in the “*Summa Aurea*,” in Vol. XII, No. xxxii, Col. 1108 (Miranda Mariana).

Cimarolo has taken his facts from Bernardino, but he has worked them up into a more sprightly narrative, and I therefore translate him rather than the original in Nos. 2, 3, and 4.

From the artistic point of view this little picture seems to me the gem of the series.

already taken up his sword to that end, he was suddenly smitten with the consciousness that his purpose would greatly offend the Divine Majesty, and that on no account must he put it into effect. Wherefore, commending himself devoutly to the Mother of God, he humbly prayed her that by virtue of her Immaculate Conception she would save him from committing so grave a sin as to attempt his neighbour's life, and soil his own conscience forever. Scarcely had he conceived this pious thought when lo! he found his sword so twisted in its scabbard that he could by no manner of means draw it forth to stab and thrust withal. Thereupon the two enemies were wholly reconciled, and from that moment each vied with other in celebrating, with pious fervour, the fame of Our Lady Conceived without Sin. The sword which had been so miraculously twisted is still preserved and shown in Aquila, a lasting memorial of so great an event."¹

¹ *Mariale*, "Serm. de Concept.," vii, fol. 43b. "Summa Aurea," Vol. XII, No. xlix, Col. 1140. Of the existence of the sword in 1493, Bernardino testifies "sicut mihi retulit quidam frater noster." I have been unable to ascertain whether the sword is still preserved and shown in Aquila.



THE CHIAROSCUROS. Nos. 3 AND 4

No. 4

“There lived at Bergamo in Italy a certain woman of blameless life, known for her singular devotion to the Mother of God Conceived Immaculate. She had a little son of four, who in the sweet innocence of that age, was the only joy of his parents, and the general delight of the whole household. It happened that the mother took the little boy with her to the terrace on the roof so as to enjoy the cool breezes at sunset, and there she let him run about at will. But lo! while he was thus disporting himself, by unlooked-for mischance and before his mother could save him, he fell headlong from the terrace. What could the afflicted mother do, who would rather have lost her own life than this little son so dear to her? As soon as she saw him fall she had humble recourse to the Most Pure Mother of the Divine Child, beseeching for the honour of the holy mystery of her Immaculate Conception, that Our Lady, a more careful mother, would rescue the little son of whom his earthly mother had been too careless. Scarcely had the afflicted lady uttered this prayer than she rushed down stairs to look for her son

whom she believed to be dead. But, although he had fallen from so great a height on to the hard stones, she found him without bruise or scathe, to the universal marvel, and all were filled with deep thankfulness to the Mother of God, who, when invoked, had granted so great a favour in memory of her Holy Conception."¹

One other point to show how delightful was the cast of mind of Francesco Raibolini detto il Francia. This idea will certainly be his own, and not that of the theologians who coached him. He has to depart from custom: in the predella he is to place not incidents from the lives of the Saints in the main piece as the custom is, but miracles worked by invoking Mary Immaculate. He obeys,

¹ *Mariale*. "Sermo de Concept.," viii, fol. 49a. "Summa Aurea," Vol. XII, No. xxii, Col. 1127. Francia does not show us the child in the act of falling, but then he never painted horrors. He has preferred to show us the child, prone indeed, but joined to his mother while in the act of prayer, saved indeed by her prayers.

Of course both in this picture, and in No. 3, the figures kneeling in prayer before a picture of the Immaculate Conception, are only symbolical of the prayer offered up in two very diverse moments of mental anguish.

but nevertheless, with infinite art and exquisite imagination, he does make the miracle pictures fit in with the Saints above. Beneath Saint Anselm he puts the story of the Abbot Helsinus, the popular account of which was supposed to have been written by the Saint himself; beneath Saint Augustine, the Prince of Controversialists, he places a religious disputation; then taking the second scene of the second picture, beneath a fiery champion of the Immaculate Conception—Duns Scotus—he places another and a humble champion in the fire;¹ beneath King David, who so often escaped the vengeance of his deadly enemy Saul, he places that man of Aquila who was likewise thus spared; and beneath King Solomon, whose immortal judgment gave back a child to its lawful mother, he places the incident in which the prayer of a mother to the Mother Immaculate restores a child in peril to the maternal embrace. What lively imagination, what true and happy

¹ This is proof to my satisfaction that Francia was perfectly well aware that the kneeling figure was not Saint Anthony of Padua, but that vigorous champion of the privilege, John Duns Scotus.

fancy, what benign intelligence, what compassionate loving-kindness! It is beyond all praise, and beggars our admiration. Francesco here surpasses all his fellows, lifts us up into regions where it is good for us to be, and assuredly takes us deep down into the inner workings of one of the noblest minds that ever taught the Christian Faith in tempera and oils.

V

THE CHAPEL FOR THE PICTURE

I HAVE now done with the description and meaning of Francia's sublime Altar-piece, and can pass to the subject of the hitherto unknown donor, and of the Chapel and Altar of the Conception, effaced and forgotten, for which the picture was destined by an act of deep and touching piety. As soon as I became aware that this fine work was not an Assumption or a Coronation, as the best writers tell us, but a Conception, I began to ask myself the very natural question: how comes it that an Altar-piece of the Conception is found hanging in a Chapel of the Assumption? Hanging is, as it happens, the right word, for the picture, as I have said, is placed flat on the wall of the Chapel without any reference to the sacred use for which it was painted, just as if it were on the walls of a melancholy pinacoteca, full of works torn from the churches where they were meant to

honour God and inspire devotion. If an altar-piece, I argue, then surely there was an Altar, if an Altar then, as surely, in a Church which is all side chapels must there have been a Chapel of the Conception to contain the Altar. But where is this Chapel? All the existing side-chapels are quite satisfactorily accounted for by the writers on San Frediano, and not one mentions a Chapel of the Conception.

For a moment I thought I had discovered the vanished Chapel. On the wall space between the Chapels of the Annunciation and Assumption, in which there is deeply embedded a wooden Confessional, high up on a level with the other arches of the side-chapels, I noticed in the stuccoed wall the faint outline of an arch. Here, assuredly, a space had been walled up, and why might not this once upon a time have been a dark narrow Chapel? The walled-up space, when I got inside it, proved to be one of the stanzas of the Opera used for storing church furniture. A careful examination of its structure showed that it could never have been a vaulted Chapel like the others. Yet somewhere in the Church there *must* have been a

Chapel of the Conception. I was destined to find it without too much difficulty, but before proving the point I had better have done with elementary description of the Chapel of the Assumption as it stands to-day.

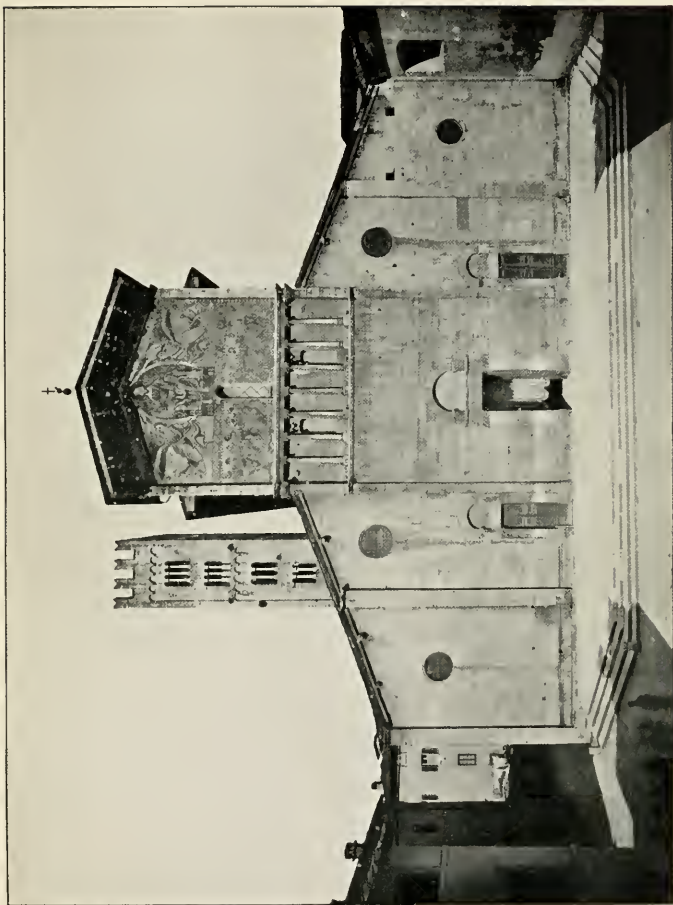
The Basilica of San Frediano was for centuries in the hands of Canons Regular of the Lateran. They were suppressed in 1780 at the request of the Republic of Lucca with the consent of Pius VI, but on the condition that their monastery and revenues should be used for public education. The huge monastery is still a boys' school, the Regio Collegio. The Church has since been ministered by secular priests. The chief priest has the style and title of Priore. The Church itself is a very noble specimen of the simple Lombard basilica. From the purist's point of view it is spoiled by its side-chapels, all added in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries by breaking down the Church walls. Look at the representation of the façade here reproduced: it shows clearly how the side-chapels, by expanding the width of the Church, have deprived it of its original gracefulness of form. On the other hand the side-

chapels have done much to make the interior entirely devout. The Chapel of the Assumption was built by a famous Lucca family, the Micheli, and completed in 1528. The last of the Micheli, Pompeo, died in 1840. The Guinigi-Magrini were his heirs. To them now belongs the Chapel and, as one might suppose, all that therein is.¹

On the west² wall of the Chapel is a modern-looking Altar called of the Conception, and manifestly of the Conception, for above it, in an oval frame, is a picture of the Immaculate Conception of the conventional type, which took birth in Spain in the seventeenth century. On the pedestal of either pillar are the Guinigi arms: gules, on a cross argent, twenty (sometimes sixteen, sometimes eighteen) lance-heads azure. On the wall opposite the Altar, fixed in a stucco frame for show, is a splendid carved wood coloured group

¹ By both the ecclesiastical and the modern law the patron of a private chapel forming part of a public Church is nominally owner of the contents, none of which, however, may he remove or alienate.

² San Frediano is the only Church in Lucca that has its sanctuary to the west. How that came about is highly interesting, but is far too long a story to tell here.



ALINARI

THE FAÇADE OF SAN FREDIANO, LUCCA

CHAPEL OF THE CONCEPTION 77

of the Assumption by Masseo Civitali, a nephew of the great sculptor Matteo—obviously an altar-piece, but wanting its Altar.¹ Another mystification, for odd indeed it seemed, nay unthinkable, that in a spacious Chapel of the Assumption there should be no Altar of the Assumption. But this Altar, too, I was able to trace later on.

My search in the Public Library and Record Office for evidence of a Chapel of the Conception was speedily rewarded, thanks to the kindly aid of willing and intelligent helpers. Existing records of San Frediano are deplorably thin owing to a great fire which occurred in the Monastery in 1596, carrying away every vestige of a title-deed. But a certain Canon, one Pietro Carelli, betook himself to the Office of Notarial Archives, and there for a month² industriously made a note of all the deeds relating to the Church and Monastery between the years 1454 and 1549. These notes exist in a MS. volume in the Record Office, and from them I first learnt that I had been quite right in deducing a

¹ The Chapel is popularly called “degli Angeli” on account of the choir of Angels in Masseo’s altar-piece.

² December 3rd, 1598, to January 2nd, 1599.

Chapel of the Conception. This is what I read to my delight: "Madonna Maddalena, relict of Bartolommeo Stiatta founded and endowed the Chapel of the Conception in San Frediano, which is in the patronage of the Stiatta family, as appears from several Wills made by the said Madonna Maddalena, executed by Ser Benedetto Franciotti." (A noted Lucca notary.)¹

The discovery was revolutionary as regards the Francia picture. It hangs, according to all accounts, in a Chapel built by the Micheli family. It was only natural to have searched Micheli records for the origin of this picture. It now appears that there really was a Chapel of the Conception, founded and endowed by quite another family, the Stiatta, and that since this picture is an unquestionable Conception, it was ordered not by the Micheli for the Chapel of the Assumption, but by the Stiatta for the Chapel of the Conception. At all costs I must see those several Wills of Madonna Maddalena Stiatta.

But before going to the Archivio Notarile I will find out all I can about this family whose name is

¹ MS. No. 16, Archivio di Stato, p. 56b.

entirely new to me, whose memory has fallen into complete oblivion in modern Lucca. MS., No. 2965 in the Library,¹ MS. No. 128 in the Record Office,² give me a bare genealogy and the arms: or, a lion rampant, gules.³ I learn that the family are noble and Consular; I see that they have been traders of consideration. The latter MS. tells me they became extinct in 1675. One Girolamo was the last scion of the house. MS. No. 130 shows that the family had considerable property in the country, at Massa Pisana, Stabbiano, Moriano, and other places.⁴ From Baroni I glean a few other particulars, more or less useful.⁵ Scanty enough details these, but in the matter of the Chapel I have a further little good fortune in the Library. Once more I have occasion to bless the memory of that self-same Canonico Pietro Carelli

¹ "Memorie Storiche e Familiari di Lucca," p. 566.

² Baroni, "Famiglie Lucchesi," vol. v, p. 83.

³ The Arms on the cover of this book are taken from a shield on the Palazzo Stiatto, 25, Via Fillungo. Drawing by Mario Carlesi, a promising student at the Belle Arti.

⁴ Barsanti, "Pantheon delle Famiglie Patrizie di Lucca," pp. 133b-134.

⁵ Notizie genealogiche delle Famiglie Lucchesi, MSS. Nos. 1101 to 1139. The Stiatto family is in No. 1132.

who spent such an industrious month among the Notarial Archives of his native city. He has also left us a description of San Frediano, and in this he treats of the Chapel of the Conception.¹ "Altar of the Conception of the Madonna in San Frediano. Madonna Maddalena Stiatta, widow and relict of the late Bartholomew, son of Baldassare Stiatta of Lucca, founded and endowed the Altar of the Conception in the Church of San Frediano which is in the gift of the Stiatta family as appears from several Wills made by the said Madonna Maddalena and executed by Ser Benedetto Franciotti. And note that the Chaplain of this Altar is a secular priest presented and confirmed by the Bishop as appears in the Books of the Collations (of Benefices) and more particularly in Book P., p. 39, O., p. 160, L., p. 3." This latter bit of information was to prove of priceless value.

But it is time that I hurry off to the Archivio Notarile to see if I can find those several Wills of Madonna Maddalena Stiatta. I trust that the

¹ MS. No. 415, "Notizie Antiche di San Frediano," p. 13. The introductory letter to Don Frediano Burlamacchi, Prior of San Frediano, is dated 30th March, 1599.

reader will bear with me if I take him thus step by step through all the stages of these modest researches. An author should always show how a book of the kind grew under his hand; he should put his reader in the position to build it up for himself bit by bit. Above all should he be careful to emphasize what he does not know. If writers on art, especially, had only plainly pointed out what they did not know or understand, instead of taking cover under description, what a lot might have been found out for them by humbler craftsmen. I am also anxious to show the reader how very pleasant, how very exciting, and above all, how very easy is research work of the kind. At least I'm sure 'tis so in Tuscany. Most of it is based on abundant talk, on the acquired or natural knowledge of other living human beings, extracted by eager question, put forth in courteous, patient, ungrudging replies, and common politeness will be found a far more serviceable instrument of research in Tuscany than erudition gained by the flicker of the midnight oil.

The vast storehouse of the Archivio Notarile is arranged entirely according to Notary in two main

divisions—Wills and Deeds. It was not therefore difficult to lay hands on the musty tomes containing the Wills executed by Ser Benedetto Franciotti, and the index to the volumes made it easy to find the several Wills of Donna Maddalena Stiatta.

Her first Will is dated 6th May, 1479, eleven years, as is supposed, before Francia began to paint. In it there is already mention of a Chapel of the Conception. The Wills are in the third person, the wishes of the testatrix being expressed by the Notary. "Her body she willed, ordered and decreed should be buried in the Church of San Frediano in Lucca with the body of her late husband Bartholomew, in a certain Chapel which she willed, ordered and bequeathed should be built in the said Church of San Frediano in honour of and under the name of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and for the building of the said Chapel and the tomb to be constructed in it she willed, assigned and left the sum of two hundred and twenty ducats to be expended out of her estate."¹

¹ Vol. i of *Protocollo of Wills* executed by Ser Benedetto Franciotti, p. 446. "*Corpus vero suum sepeliri voluit jussit et*

But that she did not await the day of her death for carrying out the darling project of a Chapel of the Conception, the following important extract from her Will of the 30th August, 1504, most fully proves: "Likewise for the love of the Mother of God she ordered and willed that in the Chapel *newly built* in the said Church there should be and should be made an Altar with an honourable picture or icon of the Conception on which her executors and assigns shall spend the sum of one hundred ducats of her estate."¹ Here at length is

mandavit ad ecclesiam Sancti Fridiani de Luca cum corpore quondam Bartholomei viri sui in quadam Cappella quae construere voluit iudicavit et reliquit in prefata ecclesia Sancti Fridiani sub honore et vocabulo Conceptionis Beatae Mariae Virginis pro cuius fabrica cum monumento in ea construendo expendi voluit iudicavit et reliquit ducatos ducentos viginti sumptibus haereditatis suae."

The "construire voluit" and "pro cuius fabrica," the reference to a tomb to be in a Chapel, clearly show that a Chapel was to be built, not merely a chaplaincy to be "erected" at an Altar, as one might infer from Carelli's "Notizie Antiche di San Frediano" (MS. No. 415, Bib. Pub., p. 13).

¹ Franciotti Wills, vol. ii, p. 283. "Item amore Dei Matris iudicavit et reliquit quod in Cappella noviter constructa in dicta ecclesia fiat et erigatur unum altare cui fiat tabula sive ancona honorabilis Conceptionis de qua et quo videbitur infra

mention of a picture. Therefore, in August, 1504, Francia had not yet received his order for the altar-piece of the Conception.

Donna Maddalena certainly had a mania for making Wills, and was a desirable client for a Notary. There is a Codicil of 1484 to the Will of 1479; there is a Will of 1st October, 1487; and another of the 25th June, 1493; neither of which concerns us. But there is an unexecuted and undated Will from which a bit of information of great interest to the student of art may be gleaned. The Will that precedes it is dated 27th May, 1511, the Will that follows after 9th August, 1512. Maddalena's was probably drawn at the end of May, 1511,¹ and renews the bequest for an honourable picture of the Conception for her Chapel. Therefore Francia's altar-piece was not painted before May, 1511, and belongs to the period of his life (*ob.* 1517) in which he had attained to the full zenith of his magnificent powers, nay, possibly, as *scriptis ejus executoribus et fide commissariis in qua expendant sumptibus haereditatis suae ducatos centum latos.*"

¹ The gap in the Wills of so popular and busy a Notary points to long absence or illness, and probably accounts for Maddalena's Will never having been executed.

THE REGISTER OF BENEFICES 85

I have shown (p. 8), to the very last year of his splendid career.

Happy in this treasure trove, my next visit was to the Archiepiscopal Chancery to see what the "Libri Collationum," or Registers of Benefices had to tell about the institution of a Chapel of the Conception in San Frediano. In volume P, fol. 39, just as the Canonico Pietro Carelli of happy memory had noted in MS. 415 of the Public Library, I find the institution of a Chaplain to Maddalena Stiatta's Chapel of the Conception in San Frediano. And I find other matter to arouse interest and astonishment. To begin with this deed of conferment is dated 27th January, 1519: Maddalena Stiatta must therefore only have quite recently deceased. But I commenced to read in a script far more easily decipherable than the Wills of Ser Benedetto: "Donna Maddalena, relict of the late Bartolommeo Stiatta of Lucca, in her last Will, now published, and executed on the seventh (*sic*) of August, 1518, by Ser Jacopo, son of the late Bartolommeo Serantoni, Notary Public of Lucca, amongst other things founded and endowed a Chaplaincy under the name of the Con-

ception of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Altar [a blank space] in the Church of San Frediano in Lucca." So after all there is a later Will of Donna Maddalena, not drawn up by the family Notary, Ser Benedetto Franciotti, whom she must have survived, but by Ser Jacopo Serantoni, who succeeded him.

In the tomes of Ser Jacopo at the Archivio I found the real last Will and Testament of Maddalena. It is dated 17th, not 7th August, 1518, as stated in the "Liber Collationum," vol. P. In this I read: "Her body she willed ordered and decreed should be buried in the Church of San Frediano in the family vault of the Stiatta. . . . Likewise the said testatrix founded and erected a Chaplaincy under the name of the Most Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, endowing it and bequeathing to it annually the sum of six golden ducats."¹ There is a Codicil to the Will dated

¹ "Protocollo of Ser Jacopo Serantoni," vol. ii, p. 6b. "Corpus vero suum sepeliri voluit jussit et mandavit in ecclesiam Sancti Fridiani in tumulo familiae de Stiattis. . . . Item cum ipsa testatrix fundavit et erexit unam cappellaniam sub titulo Immaculatissimae Conceptionis Beatae Virginis Mariae in ecclesia Sancti Fridiani dotando eam, reliquit eidem annuatim ducatos sex auri latos."

DONNA MADDALENA'S LAST WILL 87

18th January, 1519: "By this Codicil she desired to be buried not in the family vault of the Stiatta as stated in her Will, but in the new vault in her Chapel in the aforesaid Church of San Frediano in front of the Altar of the Chapel of the Most Immaculate Conception."¹

Here indeed is matter for reflection. The Codicil is dated 18th January, 1519; the act of conferment in the "Liber Collationum" bears date the 24th January: therefore Maddalena Stiatta died between the 18th and 24th January, 1519. There is no longer question of an Altar for the Chapel: therefore the Altar was already made. Of course there is no longer talk of any picture, for Francia died in January, 1517, and the picture was already painted.

In this last Will and Testament Maddalena

¹ *Codicil*, "Cum istis codicillis voluit sepeliri non in sepulchro de Stiattis prout dicebatur in Testamento, sed voluit sepeliri in sepulchro novo suae Cappellae ecclesiae predictae monasterij S. Fridiani ante altare ipsius cappellae Immaculatissimae Conceptionis."

That superlative "immaculatissima" and not "immaculata," is a revelation of Donna Maddalena's touching devotion, and likewise of the firm foothold already gained by the dogma in the Marian city of Lucca.

Stiatta also makes provision for the future of her Chapel. On her death the patronage of it is to go to a young grand-nephew, Giovanni Battista, who was the son of Baldassare, who was the son of Gasparre Stiatta, and to his heirs male for ever. Should his descendants in the male line fail, then the Chapel is to go to two brothers of the great house of Bernardini, Paolino and Silvestro, sons of Bartolommeo, and to their heirs male for ever. And if their descendants in the male line should die out, then the Chapel is to revert to the female line of this same favoured grand-nephew. Giovan Battista, as it happened, died (1542?) without either male or female issue. The Chapel then reverted to the Bernardini. Monsignor Pietro Guidi, Secretary to Cardinal Lorenzelli, has with a kindness for which I can never be sufficiently grateful, searched the whole of the Registers of Benefices for me, and has found only two references to the Chaplaincy of the Conception. In 1622 a Chaplain was presented by Silvestro, the last of the Bernardini, with a right of presentation.¹ In 1653 Monsignor Rota, the Bishop of Lucca him-

¹ "Lib. Coll.," K. 3, fol. 199.

self presented to the Chaplaincy,¹ Silvestro Bernardini evidently being dead.² The juspatronatus having thus passed away from the Bernardini, and Giovanni Battista Stiatta having had no female issue, to whom did the Chapel, the vestments, the chalices and other furniture, and the noble altar-piece of Francia, then revert? Not to the present heir-at-law of the Stiatta—if any—because specifically excluded by Maddalena's Will. Therefore to the Church, *i.e.* to the Opera. That was the consensus of opinion among the Doctors of either Law whom I had the privilege of consulting on the subject. Dryasdust details, I fear, and drier, but it is at least interesting to have established the present nominal owner of Francia's superb altar-piece.

It still remained to locate the mysterious Chapel of the Conception whose structural existence was so clearly established by these Wills, and that I was happily able to do by consulting the Will of the founder of the Chapel of the Assumption.

¹ "Lib. Col.," B. 4, fol. 232.

² Pedigrees in the Bernardini family Archives, though wanting in the precise date of death, show that he died without male issue.

That Chapel, as at present understood, like the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament (Trenta) opposite, has two arches. All the other private Chapels (except the Bonvisi) have one arch only, and are divided from each other by stout walls. The truth of the matter can only be that one half—the western half—of what to-day is called the Chapel of the Assumption, really was the Chapel of the Conception. The two Chapels, so as to be symmetrical with the double-arched Chapel of the Trenta opposite, were probably never divided by a wall. The Micheli and the Stiatta were closely related, and were joint patrons of the Altar of Santa Fausta in this very Church:¹ it is easy to imagine them coming to such an arrangement. The Opera would almost certainly insist upon it. Had these two Chapels been divided by a wall it would greatly have spoiled the harmonious symmetry of the interior.

But it is possible to prove this point as to the ubication of the Chapel of the Conception. And as follows: Niccolò, son of Francesco Micheli, in his Will, dated 19th May, 1499 makes provision

¹ Will of Maddalena Stiatta, 1st October, 1487.



MRS. CARMICHAEL

THE CHAPEL OF THE
CONCEPTION

THE CHAPEL OF THE
ASSUMPTION

for carrying out the last wishes of his father about a Chapel of the Assumption. He states that he has come to an agreement with the Prior and Canons that the Chapel is to be built in that part of the Church where there is a large picture of the Blessed Virgin on the wall, and he orders that *one* arch is to be made in that place.¹ That only one arch can have been intended, as is said, is evident from the reference to a fresco of the Madonna, for it would be impossible to suppose that such a picture could be so large as to fill the space required for two arches (about forty feet).² I have

¹ What vandalisms were committed to secure these much-coveted private chapels, we can surmise perhaps, but only know in infinitesimal part.

² "Ser Benedetto Franciotti's Wills, vol. I, fol. 183. "Et quia dictus quondam ejus pater non declaravit locum in quo debeat collocari et fabricari dicta capella in prefata ecclesia Sancti Fridiani, ideo dictus testator dixit se composuisse et concordasse cum Domino Priore et Canonicis dictae ecclesiae . . . et ita voluit ac judicavit et reliquit quod capella debeat hedicare et construi et poni et fabricari in eo loco in quo est picta in muro una ymago magna gloriose Virginis Marie sedens cum filio in brachiis suis in quo voluit fieri *unus arcus magnus*."

See also the Abbate Telesforo Bini's interesting essay on San Frediano "Della Basilica di San Frediano e della question se la facciata un di fosse dove ora è il coro," read before the

also clear seventeenth-century evidence to show that the two Chapels were not then divided by a wall, for the Acts of Bishop Rota's Visitation of 1651 speak of the Altar of the Conception being in the Chapel of the Assumption.¹ Even at so early a date had the Chapel of the Conception become forgotten and effaced! Then a famous Lucca archaeologist, Sebastiano Donati, in his "Iscrizioni delle Chiese di Lucca," speaks of the tomb of Bartolommeo Stiatta as being "near the Altar of the Assumption."² This clearly excludes any idea of a dividing wall. He adds that the tomb has on it "the arms of Trenta and Stiatta as on the Altar," Lucca Academy, 1st August, 1843, and printed in vol. xii of the Academy's "Atti," pp. 512-558. Bini knowing the will, is surprised to find two arches in existence instead of one, but then he had never heard of a Chapel of the Conception. It is a pity, for our sakes, that he does not seem to have examined the walled-up Stanza dell' Opera or attached the slightest importance to it. I may here mention for the sake of friends in Lucca a little discovery that does not concern my present argument. This walled-up space undoubtedly represents—hitherto a fruitlessly debated point—the old entrance from the Monastery into the Church, before the present sacristy was built, and while the Choir was still in the middle of the Basilica.

¹ Rota, 1650-1656, p. 108.

² MS. 1209, Bib. Pub., p. 67.

i.e. the Altar of the Conception. Trenta, too, writing in 1820, says that the Francia picture is "in the Chapel of the Assumption" over "the Altar of the Conception." Clearly from these records there was, since the seventeenth century, no dividing wall between these two Chapels as between all the other private Chapels in the Church, and it is as good as certain that there never was one. But as the Stiatta died out and were forgotten, the Micheli, in all good faith, like the Guinigi after them, came to regard the whole of the double-arched space as being one and their own Chapel.

One thing only would I make clear to the reader who may have done a little justifiable skipping among all these dry details, and that is, that to Madonna Maddalena Trenta nei Stiatta, whose name has hitherto remained buried under the dust of ages, and to her alone, belongs the merit of ordering, and paying for, Francia's superb picture of the Immaculate Conception, the significance of which (like her own name) had lain hidden from educated mankind, thanks mainly to the imperfect theological equipment of writers on art. To her, then, all honour and glory, and to her memory the

benediction both of those who hold true art dear and those who revere the splendours that should ever be effulgent upon the Altars of God.¹

¹ Maddalena Stiatta's Will shows a bequest to the Friars of San Francesco. This proves that she loved and would frequent that Church. It is likely enough that devotion inspired, that graces received, by prayer before the old picture, moved her to desire "one like it" for her own Chapel of the Conception.

It will interest friends in Lucca to know that she left two pearls set in gold to be borne on the breast of the Volto Santo forever. Are they there now?

VI

THE PEREGRINATIONS OF THE PICTURE

FRANCIA'S altar-piece of the Conception has undoubtedly gone through some peregrinations. The places in which it can be stated with certainty that the picture has found itself since Francia painted it are four in number, and the list is almost certainly complete.

1. In Madonna Maddalena's dark Chapel of the Conception.

2. In 1827, when the picture was restored, it was brought forth from the Chapel and placed over an altar which was situated in the nave behind the pulpit, in fact against the walled-up space to which I have alluded.¹

¹ "Cenni Storici Artistici sulla Cappella Guinigi." By an anonymous writer in the Lucca "Araldo," No. 7, 1857. The Altar of the Conception was of wood, in the early cinquecento style. It was removed from the Chapel in 1836, on account of

3. In 1856 this Altar, with the picture still above it, was removed from the nave to the place where we now see it, and almost completely restored.

4. In 1881 the picture ceased to serve the purpose for which it was painted, and was taken from above the Altar and hung against the North wall, where the light in which to see it may be a trifle better, but where its meaning is effectually darkened to the ordinary passer-by.

Unfortunately our sole authorities for the peregrination of 1827 are Michele Ridolfi and the anonymous writer in the "Araldo." Of course an Altar cannot be transferred from one Chapel to another without the sanction of the Opera and the approval of the ecclesiastical authority. I have been courteously allowed by the present Operaro, Dr. Giulio Lippi, to spend many hours in the Archivio of the Opera of San Frediano, acting as my own archivist, turning over papers and records at will—I found nothing whatsoever. Four kind-hearted ecclesiastics have made unremitting search

its sad state of disrepair, and was sold a few years ago to a Florence dealer! Thus altar and altar-piece are separated beyond all hope of ever being conjoined together again.

for me in the Archiepiscopal Archives—again nothing whatsoever. Signor Adolfo Lippi and Signor Mario Bongi have searched and searched again in the Archivio di Stato—absolutely nothing whatsoever. In the Municipal Archives, however, something—that the “Protocollo sopra gli Edili” for the years 1824-1827 was missing beyond hope of recovery! I have therefore to fall back on the earliest known source of information, Michele Ridolfi, and him I will quote in full.

“This picture, before the restoration,¹ was in a very dark Chapel where its beauty could not be appreciated, and the predella was hidden by the so-called carta-glorie (altar-cards). It was then by a wise provision transferred to the Altar we now see, and the predella was joined to the picture, being separated therefrom only by a frame”² (*i.e.* a gilt strip). As will be seen he does not tell us the name of the Chapel. The Altar was transferred from this dark Chapel to the Nave, and

¹ I at least was able to unearth the Ministerial consent to the restoration of the picture. It is dated 30th August, 1827. See “Commissione sopra le Belle Arti. Scritture.” Archiv. Filza, viii, No. 79.

² “Scritti d’Arte,” p. 10.

placed in the space between the two chapels of the Annunciation and Assumption, in fact, against my walled-up arch. This is proved by the statements of various writers, as, for instance, by Mazzarosa, who says that Francia's picture "is over the altar behind the pulpit."¹ There it remained till 1856.

We marvel to-day—at least, I suppose so,—at the barbaric sentiment which could join together in one frame that which should be separate though not separated, to wit, altar-piece and predella, and we smile—I will hope,—at the childish complaint that the predella was partially hidden by three movable altar-cards. The museum and art-gallery view of a picture which has darkened men's minds for a century, is happily dying fast, and if Church pictures have unfortunately found their way into art galleries, we are going to try in future to look at them as if they were still in the places, and still put to the uses, for which they were painted. For in the future people are more likely to be concerned about the meaning of a picture than its artistic beauties. The glories of its colouring, the cunning folds of its draperies, the charm of its flesh tints,

¹ "Guida," 1843, p. 107.

its sweet reposeful landscapes, its subtle space compositions, will be as nothing to us compared with its sublime symbolism, its nice and subtle theology, its profound and happy realization of the religious dogma it is intended to represent. It is nothing to the purpose whether we believe or not—the artist believed, or painted for believers. By Belief alone can he be judged; only if he were faithful to Belief could he be great in his subject, however great a master of technique or composition. But this is something of a digression, and may still be distasteful to a few.

I can now pass to the second known peregrination (1856), and as to this (fortunately) there exists full documentary evidence in the Archivio of the Opera. Count Niccolao Guinigi, patron of the Assumption Chapel, in a letter dated 26th March, addressed to the Operaro and Council, proposed to restore entirely the Assumption Chapel,¹ adding the two existing skylights to relieve the darkness, on the condition that he should be allowed to sell the Altar of the Assumption and

¹ Of course including that half which we now know to be the Chapel of the Conception.

remove into his Chapel from the nave, the altar with the Francia picture above it, he to exercise thereupon all the rights pertaining to the Altar of the Assumption. Leave was granted, no question apparently being asked, by the Grand Duke's¹ Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, or by the Curia of the Archbishop of Lucca, as to who might have rights upon the Altar in the nave, and the priceless picture above it. But both the Civil and Religious Authority insisted that leave was given only on the condition that Count Niccolao Guinigi in a public act expressly declared that he had no proprietorship in the picture which, both authorities affirmed, remained with the Opera or the real owners.

The dossier on this subject is complete,² save only for the act, or a copy of the act, of Count Guinigi. But this is of no importance. The letter from the Prefect quoting the decree of the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, is dated 20th April,

¹ Lucca reverted to Tuscany in 1847, when the Duke of Lucca, returned to what was his by right, the Dukedom of Parma.

² Correspondence. Filza, No. 10. 1853-1857.

THE THIRD PEREGRINATION 101

1856; the letter of the Archbishop, 23rd April. There is also a copy of the Contract dated 11th May, 1856 (in Cartolario, numbered 27) by which Count Guinigi sells to the parish priest of Antracoli, the Altar of the Assumption for 400 francesconi or lire 2666 13s. 4*d.*, Florentine currency. (Lire 2240, modern currency.) The contract, however, exempts from the sale Maseo Civitali's altarpiece of wood, which Count Guinigi in his letter of petition offers to display in a frame of "gesso." The Altar of the Assumption stood where its framed altarpiece now stands, facing, that is, the Altar of the Conception. It is still in the parish church of Antracoli, a huge and hideous barbarity of the late seicento, which we may be thankful no longer cumpers the devout and noble Basilica of San Frediano.

To come to the last of these peregrinations. In 1881 Count Niccolao Guinigi was allowed to move the picture from above the Altar, frame it, and place it in the place where it now hangs, at right angles to the Altar. I had got wind that there was a paper writing on the back of the picture. The reader will share my curiosity as to whether

this was true, and what it can have contained. Somehow everybody in Lucca conspires to help where research is concerned: ecclesiastics, authorities, librarians, archivists, friends, the very people themselves. And so I confidently asked leave to have the great picture taken down for a leisurely examination. I sincerely thank the inspector of public monuments, Cavaliere Medarse Cappelletti, for being personally present at so responsible an operation. Sure enough we found a paper writing. It is quite recent; date 1st August, 1881. The paper recounts how certain restorations were made, leave being duly obtained, and how the picture was removed from the Altar and placed in this great gilt frame at the expense of Count Guinigi so as to save it from damage by the droppings of wax candles.¹ Nothing more. The whole

¹ Grave is the responsibility of those who have the custody of noble works of art still put to a religious use! There is not the slightest reason why a picture should suffer because wax candles are lighted before it, if only elementary care is used. Grave indeed is the responsibility of those custodians who, by wanton carelessness, give a motive to the vandals who, ignoring donors' wishes, and flouting painters' hopes and feelings, desire nothing more than a pretext to remove pictures and statues

is signed "Il Patrono: Niccolao Guinigi." The picture has remained in the same place ever since.

I fear I have drifted into very dry details, but there are yet other minute points which should be stated to make my subject as complete as may be. The minutest point is interesting if only it can be elucidated, but here I have to deal with what I cannot properly elucidate. Giuseppe Matraja, a devoted Lucchese of the last century, compiled a noble guide to the monuments of his native city. It was never printed, alas! but, happily, lies in the public library for the use of students.¹ Matraja was very careful to copy all inscriptions which he saw. Let us hear him on the subject of the Chapel of the Assumption, for of the buried existence of the Chapel of the Conception he seems to have been quite unaware. "A little further on," he says, (than the Chapel of the Annunciation) "is the

from a living use over altars and shrines to the chill fastnesses of meaningless museums and art galleries.

¹ MS. No. 553, Bib. Pub. "Guida Monumentale della Città e Diocesi di Lucca fino a tutto il 1860."

Baroni and Donati have also copied the inscriptions, but it is important to have later testimony that what they saw still existed when Matraja wrote.

third and last Chapel dedicated to the Assumption of Mary Virgin and built towards the beginning of the fifteenth [error for sixteenth] century. I do not find in this Chapel, as in the others, tombs of the patrons, but on the wall there is the following [he first gives a drawing of a coat of arms, which being blazoned, reads: argent, three bars, gules—Micheli]: ‘Aram in Assumptae Deiparae Honorem / a nobili et pervetusta / Michaelorum olim Moccidentium / familiam excitatam / Martius Pompei F. Hieronimi F. / de Michelis/ marmoribus exornavit A. S. MDCLXIV.’”¹ (This is the Altar which was sold to Antraccoli in 1856.)

“This Chapel,” he goes on, “has recently been restored by the Counts Guinigi Magrini, heirs of the Micheli, who have removed the above inscription and replaced it by the following: ‘Questa Cappella già dei Micheli / eretta per l’ultima volontà di Francesco / morto il due Luglio mille quattrocento settanta nove / I Signori Conti

¹ “Marzio, who was the son of Pompeo, who was the son of Girolamo Micheli, in the year of Salvation, 1664, enriched with marbles the Altar erected by the noble and ancient family of Micheli, once called Moccidenti, in honour of the Assumption of the Mother of God.”

Guinigi Magrini Eredi / restaurarono l' anno del Signore MDCCCLVI.'"¹

"In this restoration," Matraja continues, "a tomb was removed from the middle of the Chapel. I cannot explain how it got there, for its date was anterior to the building of the Chapel. I can only suppose that the tomb once existed in some other part of the Church, and that owing to some chance restoration or other work it was closed, and the inscription transferred to this place. Be that as it may I transcribe the inscriptions and the arms. [Arms:—Or, three bulls' heads, gules, *Trenta*; or, a lion rampant, gules, *Stiatta*. M.C.]

" ' Magdalena Nobili Trenta / Familia orta graviss. matrona / Bartholomeo Stiatta claro genere nato / integerrimo mercatori viro suo benemerenti / Hoc monumentum Amoris conjugalis / vivens faciendum curavit MCCCCLXXXVIII.'"²

¹ "This Chapel formerly belonging to the Micheli, and erected by the last Will of Francesco who died the 2nd July, 1479, was restored by the Counts Guinigi Magrini, heirs of that family, in the year of Our Lord 1856."

N.B.—The testamentary dispositions of Francesco were not fully carried out till 1528.

² "To the memory of Bartolommeo Stiatta of noble family, an

The tomb or slab with inscription which Matraja saw in 1856, or thereabouts, has now wholly disappeared! Nay, even the recent inscription recording the restoration of 1856 is no longer in the Chapel of the Assumption! I was allowed to ransack attics and cellars, lumber-rooms and crypts, and I did find the inscription of 1856 with its face turned to the wall in a store-room leading out of the Chapel of the Soccorso. Why was it ever taken down? Marzio Micheli's inscription was removed, I suppose, because his big ugly Altar had gone out into the country. But why remove the record? Of course, of Bartolommeo Stiatta's tomb—last relic of the family in San Frediano—I found no trace, nor could anyone tell me where it was moved. Maddalena, as we know from her last Will and Testament, was to be buried in a special tomb in her beloved Chapel of the Most Immaculate Conception; of that, too, alas! not a vestige remains, and I can find no

upright merchant and an excellent husband, this monument of conjugal affection was erected during her lifetime by his wife, the venerable Dame Maddalena of the noble family of Trenta, A.D. 1488."

record of its disappearance. It is important to note that Matraja observes that Bartolommeo's tomb could not have been in the Chapel of the Assumption from the beginning, because the date of the tomb is anterior to the construction of the Chapel. It was not in the Chapel of the Assumption, but only seemed to be. It was really in the western portion of what is to-day called the Chapel of the Assumption, but which we now know to have been the Chapel of the Conception.¹

One other little matter, a matter of sentiment if the reader will bear with me. Nay, rather will I hope that he may share the sentiment, since all straight-thinking people, apart altogether from beliefs and prepossessions, prefer the natural fitness of things. I was present one evening at the function of the Novena of the Immaculate Conception in San Frediano, a function of course held at the present restored Altar in the Guinigi Chapel. The modest service was reverently done, and in every way edifying. But still the sight was sad. I beheld above the Altar the conventional Madonna

¹ For proof of the position of the tomb see extract from Maddalena's Will of the 6th May, 1479.

of the Immaculate Conception, brilliantly illuminated with the beautiful fires of wax candles, and I beheld upon the wall at right angles and in close proximity to the altar, gloomily shrouded away from the sight of man by a red curtain, Francia's picture of the Immaculate Conception ordered by Maddalena Stiatta, to do honour on that very evening to this modest service of prayer and praise. Made bold to the point of interfering in what does not concern me by the constant spirit of courtesy which everywhere comes out to greet one in Lucca, I called upon the Priore of San Frediano the next day and poured into his patient ears the story of Maddalena Stiatta, of all she did to make this very feast glorious in Lucca, how she founded and endowed a Chapel of the Conception, how she would have her honourable picture of the Conception painted by the greatest painter of her time. And then I begged that never in future should there be a service in honour of the Conception in San Frediano without Francia's picture of the Conception being unveiled in honour of the occasion.

I went to the function the next evening, and

sure enough the great red curtain was drawn aside. For the first time since 1881 this deeply religious picture was being put to the uses for which it had been painted. How nobly and radiantly it shone out under that most softly illuminating of all lights, the united flame of a goodly number of wax candles. It was not much perhaps, it may have been more the satisfaction of a thought than anything else, but this much at least I had been able to accomplish in keeping alive in this Chapel the testamentary dispositions of the poor lady who, unconscious of the vandal days to come, thought to have provided forever, for the due and reverent devotion to the Immaculate Conception in the Basilica of San Frediano in Lucca.

O noble and pious Dame Magdalen Trenta, true and faithful relict of that upright patrician merchant, Bartholomew Stiatta, thy tomb eclipsed, his tomb despoiled, thy Chapel of the Conception lost to sight and memory, thy Altar of the Conception gone the vulgar way to the haggling dealer, the Masses for this thy Altar all left unsaid, thy most honourable picture of the Concep-

tion ignobly treated as a show piece and taken by the leading historians of art to be an Assumption or a Coronation,—all this were enough to make thee turn in thy tomb, but that they have robbed thee of this also. Rest in peace! We cannot change our circumstances, but we can transmute and transfigure them in the recesses of the soul. If thy name be no longer cut in marble upon an honourable tomb, rest assured it is deep engraven in our grateful hearts. The name of the woman who gave to God, without any thought of the world or its art-galleries to come, Francesco Francia's incomparable altar-piece of the Most Immaculate Conception, that name I say shall never die, but shall assuredly live forever, bright and glorious, a dear and sweet memory in the ages to come!

* * * * *

And now, having described the picture, elucidated its meaning, identified its donor, and replaced it above the Altar in its Chapel, my joyful task of illustrating Francia's divine altar-piece has come to an end. It has been a labour of love, but it will be full of defects. The academic pro-

prieties, I know, are wanting, and a proper knowledge of technique would have made my work more useful. I have been curt, didactic, rigorous, sacrificing all the delights of art to the great question of significance, being firmly convinced that all beauty is heightened by a perfect understanding of its subject, that all talk of religious pictures is a weariness of the flesh unless based on a knowledge of the painter's theology, that what physiology has done for identification, theology alone can do for hermeneutics. May I hope that the benevolent reader, indifferent to mere beauty that has no clear significance, will fathom my motives, supply my shortcomings, bear with my impatience, share my enthusiasms, glow with my hopes, scatter broadcast my doctrine, and finally forgive much to one, who, in this adventure, has laboured not a little and never without love!

APPENDIX No. 1
DESCRIPTIONS AND OPINIONS
OF THE PICTURE

* * * All Italics are mine. I have underlined here and there
* * * to call attention to errors, peculiarities, and
* * * matters otherwise interesting.

TRENTA

1820

“ BESIDE it [Chapel of the Annunciation] in *the Chapel of the Assumption*, which belongs to the *Micheli Guinigi* family, and on the altar called after the Conception, is a fine painting on wood divided into three parts. The main picture represents the Virgin *being crowned by the Eternal Father*; below, two on either side, are the Bishops SS. Anselm and Augustine, and the Kings David and Solomon, all four with scrolls in their hands bearing Latin mottoes written in a fine character; between them kneels a Saint of a Religious Order, looking away from the spectator. In the lunette is the Saviour; in the predella some little incidents painted with much grace. We are without documents giving us the name of the painter of this picture, but from the style which is quite in conformity with Raphael's before it became perfect,

there can be no doubt that it is the work of one of the best painters of the old school which was still working with applause in the first lustres of the sixteenth century. Now if the traveller who loves the fine arts will note in this picture, bit by bit, the correct simplicity of the design, the life-like beauty of the heads, the arrangement of the draperies, slight but well thought out, the soft touch in the mixture of the pigments, the strength of the still brilliant colours which give life to the figures, and finally if he will examine the lunette¹ and the predella ('gli accennati scompartimenti'), he will perhaps agree with me that this is one of the best works of Francesco Francia who died on the 6th January 1517."—*Guida del Forestiere per la Città e il Contado di Lucca*. Lucca, 1820, pp. 97-98.

Of the old picture in the Pinacoteca, Trenta writes: ("Guida," p. 84): "The pictures worthy of attention in this great Church are, etc. . . . , but above all the beautiful picture in which the *Coronation* of the Virgin in San Frediano, attri-

¹ Thus Trenta positively attributes the lunette to Francia himself.

buted to Francia, is repeated, but with considerable liberties in the details. The picture in San Francesco appears *to be a copy* of that in San Frediano, but made by a painter of the old school himself advanced in years."

There never was a family of Micheli Guinigi as Trenta seems to say, but there is of Guinigi Magrini. However, the names of Micheli and Guinigi were much associated about this time, for by a special arrangement the Guinigi Magrini were to become the heirs of the last survivor of the Micheli.

Trenta's is the first reference to the picture in print which I have come across. The oldest guide to Lucca¹ is silent on the subject, but it does mention the altar-piece in the Buonvisi Chapel and attributes it to Franciabigio! The numerous MS. sources consulted by me are also silent, even in the likeliest places. Suffice it to mention a list of the principal pictures in the churches of Lucca compiled by a noted painter of his day—Pietro

¹ "Il Forestiere informato delle Cose di Lucca. Opera del Reverendo Signore Vincenzo Marchio, Lucchese." Lucca, 1721, p. 358. San Frediano described pp. 285-290.

Paolini (1603-1681).¹ Here, too, not a word of our picture, but the Saint Anne altar-piece (which is signed) is said to be by "Francesco Francabio" (*sic*). All the other pictures in San Frediano come in for mention, including work of his own in the Refectory. One can only suppose that the joint Chapels of the Assumption and Conception were, as Michele Ridolfi says, very dark indeed, before the existing two skylights were made by Count Niccolao Guinigi in 1856.

¹ MS. Bib. Pub., No. 966, "Miscellanea Varia: No. 19. 'Nota dei Quadri più cospicui che si ponno vedere nelle Chiese di Lucca fatta dal celebre pittore Pietro Paolini, Lucchese.'"

TRENTA-MAZZAROSA

1829

“CONTINUING along the nave towards the pulpit the traveller will observe on the altar behind it, a highly prized picture, with the Virgin above *crowned by* the Eternal Father, and below four Saints, two on each side.¹ It has always been considered the work of Francesco Francia, and reckoned among the most beautiful *in his early manner*, that is to say before he adopted a greater freedom of style following the example of Raphael. We are confirmed in our theory of attribution by *the repetition of the upper part of this picture*² in a picture in the Cathedral of Ferrara, which is known without doubt to be by Francia. The heads, the folds of the draperies and the colouring

¹ No mention of the kneeling figure.

² There is no repetition whatever, only a certain resemblance between the only angel in the Ferrara picture and an angel in the Lucca picture.

are wonderful. The 'fascia' in chiaroscuro at the bottom of the picture is most beautiful, and more than ever warrants us in attributing the work to Francia. This picture used to be in the next chapel higher up the Church ('nella prossima superiore cappella') but as it could not be seen there on account of the bad light, it was moved here a short time ago."—*Guida del Forestiere per la Città e Contado di Lucca*. Lucca, 1829, p. 131.

This is a second edition of the guide by Tommaso Trenta, recently deceased, revised by the Marchese Antonio Mazzarosa.

Mazzarosa brought out another guide to Lucca in 1843, "Guida di Lucca e dei Luoghi più importanti del Ducato." His description of the picture here is exactly the same as in the 1829 edition.

MICHELE RIDOLFI

1832

“IN the same year (1827) a divine picture by Francesco Francia in San Frediano was restored. It represents *the Conception of our Lady*, who is surrounded by graceful cherubs, and below there are five characters who have treated of the Conception, either literally or symbolically. They are David, Solomon, Anselm, Augustine and *Peter Igneus*.¹ And speaking of this picture I cannot pass over in silence a predella which is below it in which are painted in chiaroscuro the most graceful little figures imaginable. This picture before it was restored was in a very dark chapel where its beauties could not be appreciated, and where the predella was covered by *the so-called carta-glorie*.² It was then by a wise provision transferred to the Altar we now see, and the

¹ Never “treated of the Conception.”

² Why “so-called”? They are called so.

predella was joined to the picture, being separated therefrom only by a frame [*i.e.*, a gilt strip] so that all can now admire it at ease."

The above is taken from a paper read by Ridolfi before the Lucca Academy on the 25th June, 1832, and printed in vol. viii of the "Atti" of the Academy (my extract, pp. 228-229). It was reprinted in his "Scritti Vari riguardante le Belle Arti," Lucca, 1844 (my extract, pp. 18-19), and again in the "Scritti d'Arte e d'Antichità," Florence, 1879, edited by his son Enrico Ridolfi (my extract, pp. 9-10).

Ridolfi (except the anonymous writer in the "Araldo") is the one and only writer who calls the picture a Conception: even his son will have it a Coronation.

But the son loyally follows the father in calling the kneeling Franciscan "Peter Igneus." Peter Igneus! But Saint Peter Igneus was a Black Benedictine, a Vallombrosan, and even if painted in white without a cowl would have the Benedictine scapular. Besides, who ever saw Saint Peter in art save in the alb, stole and maniple in which he walked through the flames outside the Abbey

of Settimo. The sight of a Franciscan in a bonfire just below the figure of Duns Scotus, coupled with the fact that igneus means fiery, accounts, I suppose, for the haphazard guess.

EDITORS OF THE LE MONNIER
"VASARI"

1850

"LUCCA. Church of San Frediano. Over one of the altars in the left nave [should be right] there is a picture of Our Lady who, *Assumed into Heaven*, is *receiving the blessing* of the Eternal Father, surrounded by angels and seraphs. Below SS. Anselm and Augustine, David and Solomon, erect; in front of the *flowering tomb*, kneeling, Saint Anthony of Padua, with his back to the spectator. What a sweet thing ('che cara cosa') the predella with four histories of little figures in chiaroscuro! The picture is not signed by Francia, but it is sufficiently authenticated by the style."—*Vasari*, Florence, Le Monnier. 1846-1857, vol. vi, p. 19.

Vol. vi, from which I quote, was published in 1850, so at that date the picture was still over the altar in the nave behind the pulpit, and had not yet been moved into the Chapel of the Assump-

tion. The editors of the Florence Vasari were P. Vincenzo Marchese, O.P., Carlo and Gaetano Milanesi, and Carlo Pini. Gaetano Milanesi subsequently brought out a monumental edition of Vasari's complete works (Florence, Sansoni, 9 vols. 1878-1882). In vol. iii he reproduces word for word the above extract from the *Le Monnier Vasari*.

MRS. JAMESON

1852

“THOSE pictures which represent the Virgin Mary kneeling before the celestial throne, while the PADRE ETERNO or the MESSIAH extends his hand or his sceptre towards her, are generally misunderstood. They do not represent the Assumption, nor yet the reception of Mary into Heaven, as is usually supposed; but the election or predestination of Mary as the immaculate vehicle or tabernacle of human redemption—the earthly parent of the divine Saviour. I have described such a picture by Dosso Dossi, at p. 47, and another by Cottignola at p. 53. A third example may be cited in a yet more beautiful and celebrated picture by Francia, now in the Church of San Frediano at Lucca. Above, in the glory of Heaven, the Virgin kneels before the throne of the Creator; she is clad in regal attire of purple and crimson and gold; and she bends her fair crowned head, and

folds her hands upon her bosom with an expression of meek yet dignified resignation—'Behold the handmaid of the Lord!'—accepting, as woman, that highest glory, as mother, that extremest grief, to which the Divine Will, as spoken by the prophets of old, had called her. Below, on the earth and to the right, stand David and Solomon, *as prophets and kingly ancestors*:¹ on the left hand, Saint Augustine and Saint Anselm in their episcopal robes. (I have mentioned, with regard to the Office in honour of the Immaculate Conception, that the idea is said to have originated in England; *v.* p. 43. I should also have added, that Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, was its strenuous advocate.) Each of these personages holds a scroll. On that of David the reference is to the 4th and 5th verses of Psalm xxvii—'In the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me.' On that of Solomon is the text from his Song ch. iv, 7. On that of Saint Augustine a quotation, I presume, from his works, but difficult to make out; it seems to be, 'In Caelo qualis est Pater, talis est Filius';²

¹ No; as witnesses to the Immaculate Conception.

² "In terra" left out.

qualis est Filius, talis est Mater.'¹ On that of Saint Anselm the same inscription which is on the picture of Cottignola quoted at p. 53, 'non puto verè [*sic*] esse, etc.,' which is, I suppose, taken from his works. In the centre Saint Anthony of Padua kneels beside the sepulchre *full of lilies and roses*; showing the picture to have been painted for, *or under the influence of, the Franciscan Order*;² and, like other pictures of the same class, 'an attempt to express in a visible form the idea or promise of the redemption of the human race, as existing in the Sovereign Eternal Mind before the beginning of the world.' This altar-piece has no date, but appears to have been painted about the same time as the picture in our National Gallery which came from the same Church. As a work of art it is most wonderfully beautiful. The editors of the last excellent edition of Vasari speak of it with just enthusiasm as 'Opera veramente stupenda in ogni sua parte.' The predella beneath

¹ "Secundum carnem" left out. By the omission Mrs. Jameson has, all unconsciously, been guilty of what, from the orthodox point of view, would be considered unquestionable heresy.

² What wonderful divination on Mrs. Jameson's part. Francia's exemplar was entirely inspired by the Franciscan Order.

painted in chiaroscuro, is also of exquisite beauty; and let us hope that we shall never see it *separated from*¹ the great subject, like a page or paragraph torn out of a book by ignorant and childish collectors.”—*Legends of the Madonna*, second edition, London, Longmans, 1857, p. lxxiv. First edition 1852, p. 108.

Mrs. Jameson has also written of this picture in her “Memoirs of Early Italian Painters,” London, Murray, 1874, p. 148 (note). First edition, 1845. Here, too, she sounds the warning note against calling such a picture an Assumption, and styles it a “Predestination of the Madonna.” But, again, fancy an Altar dedicated to the “Predestination of the Madonna.” There is no such devotion.

¹ Separated, no; separate, yes, were it not altogether too late to hope for anything so rational.

CROWE AND CAVALCASELLE

1871

"BUT now came forth a new and strongly contrasted series in which conception was regulated by most engaging grace—a grand Coronation in the Duomo of Ferrara . . . an *Assumption* at San Frediano." In a note on the same page the authors add: "Lucca. San Frediano. Wood, Oil. The Virgin in glory with Angels receiving the *blessing* from *Christ*; below and erect St. Anselmo, Augustine, David and Solomon, and Saint Anthony kneeling with his back to the spectator *before the tomb*. In a predella four monochromes."—*A History of Painting in North Italy*. London, Murray, 1871, vol. i, p. 566.

ENRICO RIDOLFI

1877

“BEYOND the Chapel of the Annunciation . . . is the Chapel once belonging to the Micheli, now to the Guinigi Magrini, and restored by them in 1856. . . . Above the altar is a picture by Francesco Francia representing the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the upper part, and below *five Saints*, David, Solomon, Anselm, Augustine and *Peter Igneus*. It is a beautiful picture, more especially on account of the figures of the two holy Kings, whose attitude is full of grace, and whose faces are magnificent in their expression. The picture cannot be thoroughly appreciated on account of the poor light in the chapel, while the predella, on which various little episodes are painted in chiaroscuro most tasteful in their design, is *altogether invisible*.”
—*Guida di Lucca*. Lucca, 1877, pp. 123-4.

In 1899 Signor Ridolfi (who by the way is that popular and much-loved Signor Ridolfi who for

many years was director of the Uffizi) brought out a second edition of his guide. It is little more than a reprint of the first edition, and contains the old statement, no longer accurate, that the picture is over an altar.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

1877

“THE *Assumption* in San Frediano at Lucca should also be mentioned as one of Francia’s masterpieces.”—*The Renaissance in Italy: the Fine Arts*. London, Smith Elder, 1890, p. 221 (note).

Of Francia’s art Mr. Symonds says, and it would be impossible to say more truly or more beautifully: “Deep religious feeling is combined with physical beauty of the purest type in a masterpiece of tranquil grace.”

JULIA CARTWRIGHT (MRS. ADY)

1881

“*FOR the same Church*¹ of San Frediano at Lucca Francia painted another large altar-piece the ‘*Coronation of the Virgin*’ which is still to be seen there. Here again he gives the subject a mystical character and introduces the patriarchal ancestors of Mary and the chief advocates *of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception*² among the figures who stand below in devout contemplation. Each bears a scroll in his hand: David points to a verse in Psalm xxvii ‘In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me’; Solomon, a noble, kingly profile, gazes earnestly upwards, showing us a text from his song ‘Thou art all fair, my love’; while Anselm and Augustine bear scrolls

¹ No; for a private Chapel in the Church, a very different thing.

² And yet the author did not divine that this was a picture of the Immaculate Conception, but calls it a Coronation.

on which we read passages from their own writings relating to the Virgin, and Anthony of Padua kneels *at the empty tomb* where lilies and roses have blossomed. This altar-piece, although less known than Francia's other masterpieces, yields to none of his works in grandeur and finish. The kneeling Madonna who, robed in purple and gold *receives her crown* (!) from the hands of the Eternal,¹ retains the same expression of sweet humility touched with sadness which marks all his Virgins, and the *scenes from the history of the Augustinian Order* on the predella are painted with exquisite taste and delicacy."—*Mantegna and Francia*. London, Sampson Low, 1881, pp. 91-2.

¹ The crown is on her head.

AUGUSTUS J. C. HARE

1883

“THE *reception of the Virgin into Heaven*. Below, David, Solomon, Saint Anselm, Saint Augustine, and a *Monk, standing by the tomb filled with flowers*—a most beautiful picture.”—*Cities of Central Italy*. Vol. i, p. 62.

In a note Mr. Hare adds: “This picture has probably ere this been seized for the Gallery (1883).” No. But it has been put to picture gallery uses in the Church itself.

BAEDEKER

1886

“OPPOSITE, next the altar to the right behind the pulpit, is the *Coronation* of Mary: below are King David and Solomon, Saint Anselm and Saint Augustine,¹ by Francesco Francia (covered). At the foot of the picture are *four scenes from the history of the Augustinian Order*.”—*Northern Italy*. Ed. 1886, p. 364.

¹ No mention of the kneeling figure.

KUGLER

1887

“PICTURES by Francia existing out of his native city are too numerous to specify. The Coronation of the Virgin in the Duomo of Ferrara, *the Assumption* in the Church of Saint Frediano at Lucca and a Nativity in the Museum of Forli, however unequal in parts, are all examples of spiritual expression with gem-like colour, etc.”
—*Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools. Based on the Handbook of Kugler.* Originally edited by Sir Charles Eastlake, P.R.A. Fifth edition. Thoroughly revised and in part rewritten by Austen Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L. London, Murray, 1887. Vol. ii, p. 367.

MURRAY

1892

“*At the altar*¹ beyond the pulpit is an *Assumption* by Francesco Francia with Solomon and David, SS. Anselm and Augustine.² Below are four scenes from the foundation of the Augustinian Order.”—*Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy*. Eleventh edition revised, 1892.

The author of the first edition (1842) writes as follows: “Francia, *the Virgin received into Heaven, in his early style*;³ and has repeated portions of the composition in one of his pictures in the Duomo of Ferrara. The *worshipping figures* consist of *two Kings, two Bishops, and a Friar*, the last *evidently a portrait*:⁴ *smaller subjects*⁵ are *introduced into the frame* below.”

¹ No longer at the altar in 1892.

² Omits all mention of the kneeling figure.

³ After 1511, as we now know, perhaps 1516.

⁴ Why “evidently”?

⁵ “Smaller subjects”—quite true, the subjects are smaller. How convincingly spun the phrase, yet how delightfully unilluminating.

DR. WILLIAMSON

1901

“THE altar-piece at Lucca has many points in common with the Berlin one. There is the same mandorla of glory and the same cherubs' heads. There are the same clouds in the sky, and the figures are grouped in the same way on the earth at the foot of the picture. In the Lucca picture, however, the scene depicted is the *Coronation of the Madonna*, who kneels humbly before the Father, who is attended by two adoring Angels, and who, with a rod, touches the crown of the Queen of Heaven as she kneels. Below, on the flower-bedecked ground, stand four figures, and in the centre kneels a fifth; and in respect to these figures Francia has returned to an old habit, and has given to each of the standing figures scrolls upon which are lengthy inscriptions. The figures are those of Saint Anselm and Saint Augustine

on the right, both habited in rich copes (one of which can still be seen in Lucca and is perfectly copied), wearing mitres, and carrying, the one a cross, and the other a crosier. On the left are two Kings—David and Solomon—wearing crowns, etc., carrying scrolls, as are the other two; and King David is playing upon a psaltery, to which a further allusion will be found on p. 84. In the centre kneels *an Augustinian monk in his habit*, and below, in the predella, are painted *four scenes from the early history of the Order*; and the whole picture is a glorification of that influential Order for the important Church where it still remains. The inscriptions were selected by reason of their reference to the Virgin. That of Saint Anselm reads: NON PUTO ESSE VERUM AMATOREM VIRGINIS QUI CELEBRARE RESPUIT FESTUM SUAE CONCEPTIONIS; and may be thus translated: ‘I do not consider him to be a true lover of the Virgin who refuses to recognize the festival of her conception’: and that of Saint Augustine reads: IN CAELO QUALIS EST PATER, TALIS EST FILIUS; IN TERRA QUALIS EST MATER, TALIS EST FILIUS¹ and may be thus ren-

¹ “Secundum carnem” left out.

dered: 'What the Father is in heaven, such is the Son; what the Mother is on earth, such is the Son.' It is not easy to identify the work of Saint Anselm from which the words used by Francia could be taken. There are two documents bound up amongst his works in Migne's edition which used to be attributed to the Saint, one a sermon on the Immaculate Conception, the other an account of the legend of Abbot Helsinus, to whom Our Lady is reported to have made a communication during a storm at sea to the effect that if he would promise to celebrate the Feast of the Conception in his monastery at Ramsey, she would cause the storm to cease. Later on a Council in London in the fourteenth century states that Saint Anselm instituted the feast in England, which may have been the case, or more probably may have been gathered from the document as to the Abbot Helsinus, which was at that time attributed to Saint Anselm. These documents are not, however, accepted by all scholars as the work of Saint Anselm, although they belong to his period, and there are passages in the works of the Saint that do not support the doctrine which these passages

enunciate. The words from Saint Augustine I have been quite unable to trace. The theological question involved in these quotations was at the time of Saint Anselm a matter of discussion, as it had not yet been declared *de fide*. In all probability Francia was guided solely by the words of his instructions, and attributed to the Saints the words *which the Augustinians at that time accepted as their utterances. The question is purely one of the science of criticism.*—*Francesco Raibolini called Francia.* London, Bell, 1901, pp. 76-78.

APPENDIX No. 2
AN IMMACULATE CONCEPTION BY
PIER DI COSIMO

THE
IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION



ALINARI

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION BY
PIER DI COSIMO AT FIESOLE

A CONCEPTION BY PIER DI COSIMO

IN the Church of San Francesco at Fiesole there is an altar-piece of the Conception by Pier di Cosimo of which a word must be said here for reasons which will appear in the sequel. The picture is signed and dated "Pier di Cosimo 1480." I regret to say that it is hung flat against a wall instead of being over an Altar, but as the frame is of ancient wood, and not of modern gilt, the effect is less melancholy and pinacoteca-like than in the case of Francia's great altar-piece at Lucca.

First to attempt a brief description. Above sits the Eternal Father, a tablet with writing in the left hand, extending with the right hand the sceptre of Ahasuerus over the Blessed Virgin, who kneels at His feet; on either side, Angels holding scrolls; below, in the centre, Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Jerome, kneeling; on the Gospel side, Saint Augustine of Hippo and Saint Bernard; on the

Epistle side, Saint Thomas of Aquinas and Saint Anselm; all four standing. The tablets or scrolls of all the Saints, except Saint Francis, bear extracts from their writings.

The following are the whole of the texts to be seen in the picture, and I add references to show where they occur in the two Offices of Leonardo Nogarolo and Bernardino de' Busti:

1. THE ETERNAL FATHER: NON ENIM PRO TE SED PRO OMNIBUS HAEC LEX CONSTITUTA EST: Not for thee was this law made but for all mankind. *Esther*, xv, 13. *Leon.*, Resp. after 7th lesson. *Busti.* Resp. throughout oct. after 9th lesson.

2. THE ANGELS ON THE RIGHT: O VIRGO BENEDICTA QUE ANGELOS VINCIS PURITATE: O Virgin most blest who surpasseth the Angels in purity. Attributed to *Saint Hilary* by *Leon.*, 4th lesson, and *Busti*, 1st lesson, but is really by Saint Anselm, *In Oratione*, 50 (Migne, P. L., clviii, 949).

3. THE ANGELS ON THE LEFT: QUAM PULCHRI SUNT GRESSUS TUI¹ FILIA PRINCIPIS: How beautiful are thy footsteps, O daughter of the Prince! *Cant.*, vii, 1. *Leon.*, Ant. Magnif. Not in *Busti*.

¹ "In calceamentis" omitted.

4. SAINT FRANCIS: CONCEPTIONEM VIRGINIS MARIAE CELEBREMUS: O come let us celebrate the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary! *Leon.*, *Invit. Mat.* Not in *Busti*.¹

5. SAINT JEROME: QUIDQUID (IN) MARIA GESTUM (EST) TOTUM PURITAS, TOTUM VERITAS, TOTUM GRATIA FUIT: That which was accomplished in Mary was all purity, all truth, all grace. *Epist. 9, ad Paul. et Eustoch.* (P. L., xxx, 131). Not actually by Saint Jerome, but to be found among his works. *Leon.*, 1st lesson. *Busti*, 1st lesson.

6. SAINT AUGUSTINE (in the act of writing): MAGNIFICA ILLUM QUI TE AB OMNI PECCATO RES- (ERVAVIT): Magnify Him Who hath preserved thee from all sin. *S. Aug. in Libro de Natura et Gratia, c. 36* (Migne, P. L., xlv, 267).² *Leon.*, 2nd lesson. *Busti*, 4th day, 3rd lesson.

¹ It is rather a happy touch of the imagination to make Saint Francis invite devotion to the Immaculate Conception in the words of the Invitatory.

² Words wrongly attributed by Bernardino de' Busti to Saint Thomas, rightly by Leonardo Nogarolo to Saint Augustine. On the subject of this quotation, P. Teodorico Asson writes me: see (which I have not been able to do) "Opus Theologicum in quibus ostenditur Immacolatam Dei Genitricem, P. Salvat. Montalb. Sambucensis," vol. ii, p. 296, No. 280.

7. SAINT BERNARD:¹ CARO VIRGINIS EX ADAM SUMPTA MACULAS ADAE NON ADMISIT: the flesh which the Virgin took from Adam had none of Adam's blemishes. Attributed to Saint Bernard by *Leon.*, 6th lesson, and by *Busti*, 5th day, 2nd lesson, but is really by Saint Peter Damian, *In Serm. 40 de Assumpt.* (P. L. cxliv, 721).

8. SAINT ANSELM: NON PUTO ESSE VERUM AMATOREM VIRGINIS QUI CELEBRARE RESPUIT FESTUM SUAE CONCEPTIONIS: I do not reckon him a true lover of the Virgin who refuses to celebrate the Feast of her Conception. *Sermo de Concept.* (Migne, P. L., clix, col. 322). *Leon.*, 5th lesson. *Busti*, 7th day, 3rd lesson.

9. SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS:² MARIA AB OMNI

¹ There is a pious tradition among the Friars of Fiesole that this figure is Duns Scotus. Would that it were! But since all the Saints except Saint Francis, for obvious reasons, hold tablets or scrolls with extracts ostensibly from their own writings, it is only logical to conclude that the figure is intended for the great reformer of Clairvaux. Besides the habit, closely examined, even if the capuce resembles a Franciscan capuce, is white rather than ashen gray, and is undoubtedly the white cowl of a Cistercian.

² I owe it entirely to the kindness and extraordinary learning of P. Teodorico Asson, O.F.M., Editor of the monumental

PECCATO ORIGINALI ET ACTUALI IMMUNIS FUIT:
 Mary was without sin whether actual or original.
 In *I Sent. Dist. 44, quaest. 1, art. 3. Leon.*, 6th
 lesson. *Busti*, 1st lesson, Oct.¹

edition of Alexander of Hales now in preparation at Quaracchi, if I am able to give the references to Nos. 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9, and to correct Leonardo and Bernardino's errors. This is a feat of learning entirely beyond my comprehension: even a "dicit Augustinus in quodam loco" seems to have no terrors for Padre Teodorico. These references have been obtained at a great sacrifice of time—a matter of days. I am indeed deeply grateful to him for such wonderful aid.

¹ For the sake of giving the references to the Offices, I repeat the remaining texts to be found in the old picture at Lucca:

THE BLESSED VIRGIN: ERUISTI A FRAMEA, DEUS, ANIMAM MEAM: Thou hast delivered, O God, my soul from the sword. *Ps. xxi, 21; A.V. xxii, 20; Leon.*, Versic. after 6th *Ps.*; *Busti*, Versic. 3rd Noct., Versic. Tierce, and Resp. Sext.

DAVID: IN SOLE POSUIT TABERNACULUM SUUM: He hath set his tabernacle in the Sun. *Ps. xviii, 6; A.V. xix, 4; Leon.*, Versic. 2nd *Ps.*; *Busti*, 2nd Ant. 1st Noct.

SOLOMON: TOTA PULCHRA ES AMICA MEA ET MACULA NON EST IN TE: Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee: *Cant. iv, 7; Leon.*, 2nd Ant. Vesp.; *Busti*, 1st Ant. 2nd Vesp.

SAINT AUGUSTINE: IN COELO QUALIS EST PATER TALIS EST FILIUS; IN TERRA QUALIS EST MATER TALIS EST FILIUS SECUNDUM CARNEM: In Heaven such as the Father is such is the

All these quotations are to be found in Leonardo's Office; No. 3 "quam pulchri" is not in Bernardino's; where Leonardo has "Caro Virginis" (No. 7), Bernardino has "Caro Mariae"; and then Leonardo's Invitatory has been used in this picture.¹ The picture is dated 1480: Bernardino's Office was not approved till 4th October, 1480: therefore it is clear as the noonday sun that Piero's altar-piece is older than the old altar-piece from San Francesco, and the jewel I have placed among the gems of Lucca loses half its value.

This reasoning seems to be flawless. Happily, however, these solid looking premisses turn out to be nothing but a castle of cards which topples at a touch. The real date of Pier di Cosimo's birth has been ascertained.² Hitherto it had been

Son; on Earth such as the Mother is such is the Son according to the flesh. *Serm. 20 ad Fratres; Busti*, 1st lesson, 6th day, Not in *Leonardo*.

¹ Yet another difference: Nogarolo makes Saint Thomas say "Maria ab omni peccato originali et actuali immunis fuit"; and Busti: "Et talis fuit puritas Beatae Virginis quae a peccato originali et actuali immunis fuit."

² Crowe and Cavalcaselle, III, p. 421. Vasari (Milanesi) III, p. 131 (note 2), "Piero, who was the son of Lorenzo, who was the son of Piero, who was the son of Antonio, gimlet-maker,

thought that he was born about 1441, but the exact year was 1462, and we further know that in 1480 he was "an assistant without pay" in Cosimo Rosselli's shop. It is certain therefore, that he was not in a position to paint such a picture as this Conception in 1480. I adduce the date of birth merely as confirmatory evidence, for truth to tell the first glance at the date on the picture reveals it to have been added by a much later hand. The fact that the date is in Arabic and not in Roman numerals also makes against its being written in 1480. I should suppose that it was added at the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century. The greater antiquity of the Lucca picture is therefore most easily vindicated.

The Fiesole altar-piece is of considerable importance as evidence that Bernardino de' Busti's

was born in 1462, as appears from his father's statement of income in 1480. In this statement he declares that 'Piero his son works with a painter without pay. He goes to the shop of Cosimo (Rosselli) at Santa Maria in Campo.' Piero at that time was eighteen years of age. Vasari says that he died at eighty in 1521, but in that year Piero was only fifty-nine years old."

Office never found any favour in the Order and was speedily forgotten. According to Vasari Piero died in 1521. Even if this picture were a late work it would show that Busti's Office was entirely forgotten by Franciscans say twenty-five years after it was written. But I think the picture an early rather than a late work. The example of Sixtus IV, the immense impulse which he gave to the Devotion, caused Altars and Confraternities to spring up very rapidly in Franciscan churches. It would be almost safe to place Piero's picture in the fifteenth rather than in the sixteenth century, and we thus get stronger evidence than ever of the complete desuetude into which Bernardino's Office speedily fell.

In the course of the brief studies which I made for the purpose of destroying the date 1480, I came across several curious and rather alarming instances of that particular intellectual obliquity which possesses mankind when looking at religious pictures.

For instance: the Editors of the Le Monnier Edition of Vasari, and Gaetano Milanesi in his later Edition, actually take this picture, in which

there is no sign of a Crown, for a Coronation! Commenting on Vasari's statement that Piero painted a Conception for Fiesole they write: "The picture of the Conception is no longer there; but instead in the Choir behind the High Altar there is a picture of the Coronation of Our Lady with six kneeling Saints attributed to Pier di Cosimo."¹ Crowe and Cavalcaselle simply say that the Conception is "missing"; they, as likely as not, if they saw it at all, took the picture to be a Coronation. "Rumohr," they add, "speaks of a picture in the Church inscribed 'Pier di Cosimo 1480' (Forsch. II, p. 352) but this also is not to be found, especially as Rumohr does not give the subject."² Not to be found! (How Ivan Ler-

¹ Le Monnier. Vol. vii, p. 121 (note 3). Milanesi. Vol. iv, p. 141 (note). Identical language in both editions. N.B.—Only two of the Saints are kneeling; four are standing. The writers have apparently not noticed the signature and date on the picture. Intellectual depravity such as could take this picture with all its inscriptions to be a Coronation, is often accompanied by an inattention which points to almost total corporal blindness.

² Vol. iii, p. 425 (note). True, Rumohr does not give the subject or describe the picture, but he does tell where to look

molieff would chuckle). Not to be found! But did you ever look for it, or failing to find it, were you too lofty to do the obvious thing and interrogate one of the ignorant friars? The Sacristan lay-brother would have had sufficient knowledge to take you behind the altar, and there, sure enough, you would have found the picture, for though it has made many peregrinations it has never been away from the Church.

One does not look for great knowledge of mediaeval pictures in the eighteenth century, but one does expect to find a knowledge of theology in a Canon of San Lorenzo. Yet the weighty and learned Canon Angelo Bandini, Prefect of the Laurenzana, Prefect of the Marucelliana, etc., etc., takes Piero's picture for a Coronation.¹ So does the Cavaliere Professore Giuseppe Dal Rosso, twice over.² So does Giovanni Maselli, editor of a complete edition of Vasari, who also gravely for it: "hinter dem Hauptaltare der Franciscanerkirche zu Fiesole."

¹ "Lettere Fiesolane." Siena, 1800, p. 211.

² "Una Giornata d'Istruzione a Fiesole," Florence, 1826, p. 82, and "Guida di Fiesole" (in Italian and French) Florence, 1846. The two books are practically identical.

announces that Piero's Conception is "missing."¹ Further research would no doubt bring forth other the like oddities, but my one concern in this brief appendix has been to demolish the lying date of 1480, and vindicate for the City of Lucca a unique, and very well-merited honour.

¹ Florence, 1832-1838. Vol. i, p. 469. .

GRATIARUM ACTIO

THERE is no end to the thanks which are due from the author of a book which, like this, is largely based on the knowledge of others gleaned in the course of persistent talk and intrusion. I owe it to many friends and acquaintances to tell what they did for me, but I fear that a bare rehearsal of my thanks is all that I can now venture upon.

The picture is a religious picture, dealing with a somewhat abstruse though very beautiful dogma, and I have therefore, to my own great profit, had constant recourse to living theologians. I must particularly thank Padre Carlo da Castel del Piano, Provincial of the Tuscan Capuchins, for pointing out to me the significance of Ahasuerus' sceptre, and another Capuchin friend, Padre Sisto da Pisa, librarian at Montughi, for sending me to

the "Summa Aurea" in search of Marian miracles, To P. Teofilo Domenichelli, O.F.M., Commissary of the Holy Land in Tuscany, whose residence, to my good fortune, is fixed at Livorno, I owe much indeed, and am correspondingly grateful. His library of rare books (*ad usum*), his vast learning, his good counsel, have ever been at my disposal these ten years and more, and I have been greatly the gainer. To P. Eletto Salandri, of the same Order, an enthusiastic Scotist, I am indebted for the patience with which he expounded to me abstruse points in the doctrine of his Master. How could I ever rightly thank the courteous and learned "Patres Editores" of the Franciscan publishing house at Quaracchi for the favours received on this and many another occasion—P. Girolamo Golubovich, editor of a noble Review, the "Archivum Franciscanum Historicum," which has entered upon its first year of vigorous life, my old friend Father Paschal Robinson, whom I found among them, though as yet he has no permanent abiding place there, P. Teodorico Asson, the Patristic scholar, P. Michael Bihl, and P. Atanasio Lopez, who worked for me when I

should have been working for myself—all these have my grateful, warm, undying thanks. P. Bonaventura Dei, who has written an interesting guide to the Church of San Francesco at Fiesole,¹ was most helpful to me in my brief study of Pier di Cosimo's picture, and I thank him heartily. My thanks, too, are due to the Father Provincial and the Father Guardian of the Franciscan House at Lucca for leave to search in their Archives, and particularly to P. Tommaso Tommasi for assistance in going through sixteen enormous Choir-books whose weight alone formed no insignificant part of the labour. I had hoped to find therein a miniature of the Conception akin to the San Francesco altar-piece, and so perhaps have established the painter's name, but I met with one of many disappointments. All these, my friends, are Franciscans. I pass to the secular clergy, from whom I have likewise received much aid.

Monsignor Pietro Guidi, Secretary to the Cardinal Archbishop of Lucca, has been unwearied in his researches for me, Monsignor Parenti, the Archiepiscopal Chancellor, Don Ferdinando

¹ "S. M. del Fiore sui Colli di Fiesole," Florence, 1907.

Simonetti, the Vice-Chancellor, have been unwearied in the patience with which they bore over-frequent irruptions into the Chancery, and in the help they always so cheerfully gave me: they, too, have my grateful thanks. Never can I sufficiently thank the priests of San Frediano, Don Samuele Pacini, the Priore, Don Michele Niccolai, the Sacristan, Don St. Omer and all the Chaplains, patient listeners all of them, and ready helpers ever. And in these thanks I include the Reverendo Economo of the R. Collegio, Don Giovanni Battista Matteucci, without whose invaluable help and encouragement I could never have solved the mystery of the walled-up Stanza dell' Opera. Great, too, is the debt that I owe to Fr. Walter Sylvester of St. Mary's, Bayswater, for labour and research in the British Museum, which exile prevented me doing for myself.

I have to thank Count Pierangelo Guinigi Magrini, patron of the Chapel of the Assumption, for giving me every assistance in his power, Count Rodolfo Bernardini, for leave to turn over the family archives, and Count Cesare Sardi, an expert in Lucca history and genealogy, for genealogical researches initiated on my behalf.

Of the Avvocato Eugenio Bindi, Curator of the Notarial Archives, it were difficult to say enough: he will believe in the sincerity of my gratitude, though he may characteristically deny the weight of my obligation. And what can I say when I come to the Archivio di Stato and the R. Biblioteca? To thee, Adolfo Lippi, kind, gentle, patient, courteous friend, who didst so unweariedly ransack for me the voluminous records of an ancient State, to thee, and to thy assistant, Mario Bongi, whose illustrious father it was my privilege to know in the years gone by, to both of you hearty thanks and cordial good wishes. Cavaliere Eugenio Boselli, model of helpful librarians, we are old friends now, are we not? and you know something of my gratitude: receive once more my thanks, and convey once more the expression of my gratitude, the sense of my admiration, to all your able lieutenants (quick wits and willing hands!), Gabriele Briganti, Manfredi Azeglio, Alessandro Tosoni, and Luigi Matteucci.

Many indeed have been those who have contributed to this book, but I must not omit to thank Dr. Giulio Lippi, the Operaro of San Frediano,

Senior Assessor of the Commune of Lucca, who made me free of the Opera's Archivio, the Avvocato Manfredo Puccinelli and the Avvocato Stefano Hermite for valuable historico-juridical opinions, and Professor Placido Campetti, Director of the Pinacoteca, Cavaliere Medarse Cappelletti, Inspector of Public Monuments, and the Cavaliere Francesco Bandettini, architect of the restorations of San Francesco, soon to be reclaimed from a military store to its right uses, for varied assistance and helpful advice; nor do I forget thee, Alfredo Caselli, in whose historic shop in the Via Fillungo, a veritable intellectual centre, I have made many prized acquaintances, and gleaned much precious information.

To all then who have helped me, Ecclesiastics, Authorities, Librarians, Archivists, Jurisconsults, Professors, Patricians, and People, to all these, deeply moved at such goodness to a stranger in the land, I give whole-hearted thanks, and send cordial, friendly, affectionate greetings. To-day, reluctantly, I bid you all farewell! but, please God, for a brief space only. For with the rich treasures that lie hid in your favoured corner of the Earth,

with the willing helpers that await me for a renewal of these labours, I should indeed be bewitched did I not speedily return to the study of the noble history and fine art, and to the enjoyment of the best qualities of human nature, which have taken root and flourish and abound exceedingly in the elect and forever delectable city of Lucca!

POSTSCRIPTUM

SUCCINCTLY to sum up the result of these researches: Francia's altar-piece in San Frediano represents the Immaculate Conception: two Saints and two inspired writers bear witness to the fact, a fifth, who was both, has a vision of the miracle, and he, emerging at length from the shadows of time and in the very year of his Sixth Centenary, proves to be the Ven. John Duns Scotus, Doctor Subtilis. The scenes in the predella are miracles worked by the Invocation of Mary Immaculate. The missing lunette has been recovered. The main picture was by request of the donor, taken from one about thirty years older in the Church of San Francesco at Lucca: the exemplar is probably the oldest existing representation of the Immaculate Conception. The altar-piece was ordered for the Chapel of the Conception in the Church of San Frediano, some time after May, 1511, by Dame Magdalen Stiatto, of the family

of Trenta, the founder of the Chapel. The Chapel of the Conception formed the western half of what to-day is known as the Chapel of the Assumption. Francia's altar-piece is hung upon its north wall. The old Altar of the Assumption is now in the Parish Church of Saint Michael at Antraccoli, near Lucca. The patronage of the Chapel of the Conception, and the Chapel furniture, lapsed to the Church in the last quarter of the seventeenth century through failure of the lines of descent indicated in the Will of the founder. The walled-up space between the Chapel of the Annunciation and the Chapel of the Assumption, formed the entrance into the Church from the Monastery. This is an archaeological discovery of considerable importance, but has little or nothing to do with the argument of my book.

A proper explanation of this picture also brings out the greater sublimity, the more spiritual quality, of early representations of the Immaculate Conception, as compared with the Spanish presentment which has become the norm. My hope, as I have said, is that this little book may only prove an introduction to a much-needed work on the

subject, and I should be deeply grateful to any of my readers who would call my attention to out-of-the-way pictures of the kind, or to early representations of the Conception in drawings, woodcuts or miniatures.

AVETE ET VALETE



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TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

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